LECTURES

UPON PART AND PORTIONS

OF THE

PSALMS OF DAVID,

AS COMPOSED FOR, AND, IN SUBSTANCE, DELIVERED

IN THE

PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF CHIRNSIDE,

AND NOW

REVISED AND ENLARGED.

BY WALTER ANDERSON, D. D.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

DEDICATION

TO

MRS. HAY

OF DRUMELZIER.

MADAM,

I DO myſelf the honour to introduce the following ſheets with the inſcription of your name; reſpectable as it is known to be, both from the rank of the family of which you are come, and of that to which you have been ſo happily joined. Educated it appears you have been, in the knowledge of the only perfect ſyſtem of religious and moral principles contained in the *Scriptures* of Divine authority and ſupernatural revelation, and have gained, from your ſtudy and veneration of them, what no outward ſituation in life can of itſelf beſtow, your improvement of mind, and the exerciſe of the moſt worthy and amiable diſpoſitions of the heart, that far ſurpaſs in value and benefit, in dignity and luſtre, all the caſual, adventitious, and tranſient honours of the world: That, by the divine bleſſing upon your pious education, ſuch laudable qualities adorn your cha-

racter in an eminent degree, muſt be acknowledged by all with whom you converſe. Hence comes that decent teſtimony of your religious ſentiments, unwarped as they are by narrow prejudices, and uninflated by party zeal; that temperate and candid, yet ſpirited, ſenſible, and engaging manner in which you expreſs, unequivocally, the thoughts that riſe in your mind upon any intereſting ſubject or occaſion; and that cordial diſpoſition to and exemplary practice of charity and beneficence, which, next to the adoration and love of the Supreme Being, is the noble and diſtinguiſhing commandment delivered to his followers, by the ever bleſſed Founder of our Chriſtian faith.

THAT, poſſeſſed of ſuch fruits of it, you may be long preſerved as a bleſſing and comfort to your family, and the delight of your many friends and acquaintance, is the earneſt wiſh, and prayer of,

Madam,

Your moſt reſpectful

and obliged humble ſervant,

WALTER ANDERSON.

EDINBURGH, *July* 20. 1797.

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ERRATA.

Page 1. line 18. leave out *not.*
Page 10. line 3. read *law.*
Ibid. l. 8. after declaration, read *given in verſe 6.*
Page 42. l. 33. for So read *To;* and after not owing, omit *of.*
Page 81. l. 32. read *curiouſly.*
Page 82. l. 12. read *in* whom.
Page 179. read *and.*
Page 241. l. 27. read *churchmen*; and add, *in our Saviour's time,* it ſeems either conceived not of him, or *ſpoke* not of him as one who had, &c.

20 MA 64

LECTURE I.

PSALM I.

WHETHER this Pſalm had, in reſpect of the time of its compoſition, ſuch priority as to entitle it to the firſt place in the ſacred collection, cannot be clearly aſcertained. But the conciſe and emphatic view it preſents of the character of the man of religion and virtue, and of his felicity and true happineſs, compared with the depraved manners and fatal courſe of the ungodly perſon, appears to point it out as an inſpired preamble to the whole Book of Pſalms. It is moſt remarkable for containing, in a few verſes, a ſummary of the argument concerning the excellence and benefit of true and undefiled religion in the ſight of God, often inſiſted upon at large, and with much perſpicuity, in this volume of piety, conſecrated to the public honour and ſervice of the ever bleſſed and adorable *Jehovah*, the only true God, who had made himſelf known to the people of Iſrael in a peculiar manner, beyond what any other nation underſtood of his divine perfections, and even in the way of a holy covenant with them.

The deportment and character of the godly, and therefore happy man, is introduced, as may be obſerved, not with very nice and diſcriminating touches, expreſſive of what he was not; as this being

made evident, the positive graces and virtues that adorn his life, would be displayed more clearly and signally to view. Upon what foundation they stood is the next point ascertained by the Psalmist, with great propriety; since, from the purity and powerful efficacy of their divine cause; their excellence and utility, strength and stability might be inferred. In the account of this doctrine, the Psalmist rises in his strain to animated description, and poetical imagery, the moral beauty and lustre of which is contrasted with the very different appearance made by irreligious and dissolute men. Them he describes not only as worthless and despicable in the judgment of all sober and considerate minds, but as special objects of the Divine indignation, before which they would be unable to stand; but seen to incur exclusion from that happiness, which alone can be found in the favour and approbation of the great Judge of all the earth, who inspects the actions of men, and has assigned to the good and the evil among them the just and suitable recompense of their opposite ways. But I come to comment on the verses as they stand in their order before us.

VERSE 1.—*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly; nor standeth in the way of sinners; nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*—As if the Psalmist had said,—Of no ordinary or common degree of felicity, but of a high and distinguished one, is that person possessed, who, knowing the world in which he lives, and the diversified actions and characters of men, forms his sentiments and estimation of the latter, not rashly, but with a cautious and discerning eye. Of those characters against which his penetration directs him to guard himself, there are three kinds; which, although not essentially different, have variation, and a peculiar aspect. In one of them, he discovers a decided opposition to every principle of religion or piety towards God, whose moral government of his rational creatures, the ungodly man wishes to be disbelieved, that he may be at liberty to live and act in the world according to the vanity

vanity of his mind, and the depravity of his heart. Of his counſel, as to life and behaviour in the world, the man of piety knows to beware, and keep himſelf pure and untainted by it: Nor is he leſs ſenſible, that too free and unguarded intercourſe with perſons, who, although knowing, and ſometimes confeſſing, that they are tranſgreſſors, yet go on without reſtraint in the practice of iniquity and ſin. To aſſociate with ſuch, or come willingly into their company, he chuſes not. There is alſo another appearance of the ungodly man's character which the Pſalmiſt marks as culpable, on account of his making it his choice to ſit *in the ſeat of the ſcornful*; or to aſſume the deportment of the derider of ſober reaſoning, who holds it for a maxim, That *ridicule is the* great *teſt of* moral *truth*. Hence, in ſubjects of diſcourſe connected with religion and morality, he endeavours to ſubſtitute it in the place of all rational argument; and, if a ſtroke of *irony*, that has the leaſt reſemblance to wit, can be ſo introduced as to ſtrike againſt and vilify the principles of the one or the other, he is ſure to exult, and take to himſelf the credit of having obtained a complete victory over both. To this vain imagination, however, thoſe only whoſe genius and capacity for argument riſe no higher than his own, yield their aſſent. In their eyes he appears to ſhine as an oracle of wiſdom, while the pious man looks upon him with pity, mixed with contempt; and every diſcerning perſon, ſenſible of the weakneſs and prevalent vanity of his mind, joins in the ſentiment, that he ought to be deſpiſed and ſhunned as an aſſociate; for any one *who would be wiſe muſt ſit and walk with the wiſe*; but the companion of fools is known to go in the beaten road to deſtruction.

VERSE 2.—*But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*—But, whatever pleaſure men, ſo characteriſed, pretend to find in their objects, the man of religion cannot perceive from whence it ariſes, or how their principles or practice can operate to any good or happy effect. They are not

the reſult of ſtudy, or deliberate judgment of what is good and evil, or what maxims are beſt to be adopted, and what avoided, in the proper conduct of human life. They are the ſuggeſtions of prejudice and blind paſſions, which the human mind too naturally follows when left to itſelf, without the help of divine counſel and direction. Such wiſdom the Supreme Being, in mercy to mankind, has been pleaſed to reveal in his holy and righteous law delivered unto Iſrael. Every rational and conſiderate perſon ſees and acknowledges that it is calculated to be *a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path*, in the world. The pious and devout man contemplates it with ſpiritual pleaſure and joy; as that fixed and eternal law of truth and righteouſneſs, which, being a tranſcript of the moral perfections of the Deity, is preſcribed by him to all his intelligent creatures, as the only juſt and eligible rule of all their ſentiments and actions. As eſtabliſhed order and regularity in the material and viſible world excites the idea of its beauty in general, and the harmonious agreement of its particular parts; ſo it is with the enlightened mind, when led to due meditation upon the law of God. The lines of its beauty are no leſs conſpicuous; and, as they more intimately concern us, and relate to the improvement and benefit of our immortal ſouls, they beget not only admiration, but love and delight; a delight which, once taſted of, is not eaſily forſaken, but cheriſhed; and that becomes the more deſirable and lively by familiarity with it. To the ſtudious mind it is a perpetual entertainment, reſorted to in the day time, and alſo in the watches of the night. *I have longed after thy precepts*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, 119th Pſalm. *I have rejoiced in thy teſtimonies as much as in all riches. Through thy precepts I get underſtanding: They make me wiſer than all my teachers. Quicken me, that I may keep them, and live.* If the contemplation of the divine law is thus delightful to the godly man, if every commandment of it engages his eſteem and approbation; What a heightening of his joy muſt ariſe from conformity to it; and being enabled to aſſimilate the temper of his ſoul, and the tenor

of

of his actions, to the bright pattern of rectitude it ſets before him! But, in weak and degenerate human nature, how can ſuch conformity take place? The beſt man upon earth muſt indeed deſpair of attaining to it in perfection; yet there is a meaſure of it competent to every true ſervant of God, ariſing from his *being placed in the houſe of the Lord*; that ſanctuary which the Moſt High hath eſtabliſhed here below, for the manifeſtation of his mercy and his covenant of grace, to the children of men. The ſpiritual proviſion made there is abundant, and well ſuited to produce the happieſt effects on the human heart. The word of God, his ſacred inſtitutions, and the influence of his ſpirit, are ſufficient to work in his people all the good purpoſes of his will, for their advancement in the ways of righteouſneſs. Therefore, the Pſalmiſt borrows from the natural world, an image expreſſive of the advantageous condition in which the godly man is placed, for every noble and worthy improvement of his ſpiritual faculties. He ſhall be, ſays he, verſe 3. *like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his ſeaſon; his leaf alſo ſhall not wither, and whatſoever he doeth ſhall proſper.* An apt, ſignificant, and ſtriking emblem *this*, of the beauty, excellence, and abiding qualities of a religious and moral life, beheld in man, which has the ſame pre-eminence above that of the unprincipled, the profane, and the vicious, as the prolific and fruit bearing tree is allowed to have over the wild, the barren, and withering one; which, unpleaſant in its aſpect, only waſtes and incumbers the ground. Religion and virtue are thoſe diſtinguiſhing qualities of the human mind, thoſe ſhoots, and that produce, of its beſt affections, which lend the only true luſtre and value to it. Equal they are to what the grafted and cultivated tree derives from its bloſſoms, its foliage, and its fruit. The natural tree, in its beſt array, is not fairer to the eye, nor more adorned and precious, than thoſe exhibitions of whatever is godlike, heavenly, and divine, in the human mind and character. The compariſon, indeed, would be inadequate and defective, if we underſtood it not, with the Pſalmiſt, to allude to thoſe

trees

trees which never drop their leaf, but carry a pleaſant and cheatful verdure throughout the year. Such, in Judea, were the palm-trees, the olives, and cedars in Lebanon; to which, in the prophetical Scriptures, the abiding influence of the ſpiritual graces of the godly is often compared. If here, as in a naturally dry and parched region, the Divine Being has opened the fountains of ſalvation, and made the *living waters* of his *ſanctuary* to flow forth abundantly; they who frequent the courts of the Lord ſhall not only be daily recreated, but ſo nouriſhed by his grace as to grow up as trees do that ſtand by the *water courſes*. Even, in this world, adds the Pſalmiſt, the godly man's purpoſes, as they are conſiſtent with the honour of God, and the good of mankind, ſhall have a favourable iſſue; *all that he doth ſhall proſper*. He will be ſeen not only to do what is right, and what is good, but to perform it in the fit time, and in the moſt orderly and effectual manner, *like the tree that yields its fruit in its ſeaſon*. His acts of duty will be ſo called forth as to meet, readily, every fair opportunity to do them. Thoſe of religion will never be ſuperficial or curſory, or ſuch as make only an outward and formal ſhew of devotion. They will be the juſt and decent expreſſions of what he feels at the time in his ſoul. Thoſe relative to men, and of the helpful, benificent, and charitable kind, will not be ſuſpended in his mind, in the cold and remiſs way of meditation upon them. He will not ſtay to behold what others around him may do, when the caſe of the afflicted, the poor, and needy, is known to him. Before he hears half the tale of their woe, his ſympathy is awake, and his thoughts are wholly turned upon what means he hath in his power to give the moſt ſuitable and ſpeedy relief.

VERSE 4.—*The ungodly are not ſo; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*—As there are objects in nature that have beauty and utility, ſo there are ſome which have neither of theſe properties, and can be reckoned of no account, unleſs as being the refuſe

refuſe of the elementary ſubſtances. Such is the *chaff*, or ſmall particles of duſt, which, having no coherence or ſolidity in them, are toſſed about as the ſport of the winds. To theſe the ungodly may be compared, eſpecially as, when at reſt and clinging to other bodies, they are diſagreeable and hurtful, and when put in motion, clouds of them darken and deform the ſky. In this manner are the ungodly ſeen to be the annoyance of human ſociety; and, at the ſame time, to have a deſtination, that marks of what account they are in the eye of the Supreme Being; to whom, alienated as they are in their minds from him, he hath ſaid, in juſt indignation, *Let them be as ſtubble before the wind, and as chaff that the ſtorm carrieth away*; Job, xxi. and 18. How often is it ſeen, in the providence of God, that irreligious and profane men are thus abandoned to the guſt of their lawleſs paſſions, that drive them on ſo forcibly that they know not whither they are going. Hence it is ſaid, that even the outward *good in their hands they find not*, but as it is poiſoned or blaſted to them; and that *fears come upon them as deſolation, and their deſtruction as a whirlwind*; becauſe they hated knowledge, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord. Therefore, adds the Pſalmiſt, *the ungodly ſhall not ſtand in the judgment, nor ſinners in the congregation of the righteous.* Characters ſo unlike are incompatible, and cannot be ranked in the ſame claſs. They are, indeed, as oppoſite as light and darkneſs, which are, in nature, irreconcilable. If, in the imperfect ſtate of things here below, an entire ſeparation of them cannot, by the judgments of men, be properly made; yet, in the ſight of the Deity, they are diſcriminated, and marked by him, as never to be conjoined. For the purity and honour of his ſanctuary on earth, he has commanded, that, as much as poſſible, the ungodly, and the truly religious, ſhould not ſtand together in the ſame congregation. But what cannot be done completely now, will be accompliſhed hereafter. His unchangeable righteouſneſs requires that theſe heterogeneous and diſcordant characters ſhould be finally ſet aſide from each other; the one under the bleſſed teſtimony of

his

his approbation, and the other under the condemning ſentence of his law. The period is fixed for this general judgment; when, as ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *The mighty God ſhall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people, and gather together his ſaints, even thoſe who have made a covenant with him.* Then ſhall the heavens declare his righteouſneſs,—manifeſted as it ſhall be in the different doom of the ungodly and the righteous. The party that hath not acknowledged him as their Creator and Ruler, but thrown off this ſacred allegiance, muſt be given up to perdition judicially; while all thoſe who have offered due praiſe, and glorified his name, by their converſation in the world, ſhall be made to ſee and rejoice in the ſalvation of their God. May we, and all men, ſeriouſly conſider this, and live in ſuch a manner as may give ground to hope, that, through the divine grace, we may be numbered with the righteous in the great day of the Lord.

I come now to ſome improvement of the ſubject. And, in the firſt place, it may be ſaid, how vain is the attempt of irreligious and worldly minded men to place the excellence and perfection of human nature upon any other ground but that of moral goodneſs and virtue. It is that which the Creator of the univerſe has ordained, and therefore the only ſtable and ſure one, of all worth, of all real dignity and glory in the world. Every other is unſolid and fading. Health, ſtrength, wealth and power, conſidered as relative to the body, and external good, however attractive they may appear; however made the great objects of the deſires and purſuits of men, are none of them put within our power, or ſubjected to our will and choice. They are all accidental poſſeſſions, ſatisfactory and comfortable only from the uſe that is made of them, and which, at beſt, are ever liable to alteration and change. Give health to the intemperate and riotous; give uncommon ſtrength to the barbarian; give wealth to the fool, or to the miſer; give authority to the tyrant, and let any one ſay, if the gift would be a good or a bleſſing, either to the individual himſelf, or to mankind.

mankind. Nothing has the ſtamp of excellence upon it, but where wiſdom and goodneſs are found. They are the ſoul that ſhine ou in all the natural works of God; they are the qualities that ſhew forth the works of his grace in the ſpirits and hearts of virtuous men; and, where they are not conſpicuous, all outward advantages become contemptible; the riches and wealth of the world are pageants, power is pernicious and deſtructive; and their value is often known in no other way but from the ſhame and the reproach that follows them. If, then, we are deſirous of true honour; if we are ambitious to attain real pre-eminence, let us ever remember that they can only be found in the ways of righteouſneſs; the work of which, as ſays the Prophet, Iſaiah is peace, *and the effect of it is quietneſs, and aſſurance for ever.* In the 2*d* place, it is to be obſerved, that God has appointed a proper ſoil for the graces and virtues of the human ſoul, out of which they ſeldom or never take root, or ſoon fall into decay. Although the world, and the ſociety of men, is the region where they are called forth, yet it is not in the broad and beaten tract of the world, or in the common walks of men, that they can be ſuppoſed to ſhoot forth in due vigour and life. The principles of virtue are not to be gathered from the current converſation or the ordinary maxims of men addicted to earthly purſuits, and ſollicitous about many things rather than the one thing needful. The improvement of our nobleſt and beſt faculties; the reformation of the heart and the affections, is a work that requires compoſure of ſpirit, and ſelf recollection. Whoever learned any proper leſſon upon this head, in the clamour of the ſtreets, amidſt the ſtrife of tongues, and the incoherent ſpeeches of men? For a retreat, and a defence againſt theſe, God has eſtabliſhed his ſanctuary, and in it a holy Sabbath, dedicated to his honour and ſervice. Devout prayer and adoration offered to the God of our lives, ſettles the agitated mind in tranquillity. The cares about the world are ſuſpended; the current of the paſſions ſubſides, while we addreſs him as the God of mercy and peace, in whom only our hope of happineſs and ſalvation is placed. This

bleſſed image, when preſented to our minds, awakes the ſenſe of every duty and every virtue. We feel a converſion of our minds, to the love of his will and his righteous laws. We reſolve, and find our reſolution ſtrengthened to proceed in the pure path of it; to do juſtice, love mercy, and walk humbly before him. What greater animation, what nobler encouragement to deeds of charity and mercy, can a virtuous and well diſpoſed mind receive, than the gracious declaration? To the truly good, the act of goodneſs, as it has been ſaid by ſome moraliſts, is a ſufficient recompenſe; but the God whom we ſerve, the redeemer, whoſe benevolence to mankind his followers imitate, have not ſo limited the reward of the righteous. The ſatisfaction that now attends that heavenly diſpoſition is but a ſmile of approbation from on high, to enliven their hearts more to the love of God and goodneſs. It is only a token imparted to them, and an earneſt of the favour and applauſe they ſhall hereafter receive in the courts of the living God, in the aſſembly and congregation of the juſt and righteous, whoſe way, ſays the Pſalmiſt, is known to the Lord, ſo known, that their names are written in indelible characters before him, the witneſs, and the judge of their conduct and actions, and therefore the bountiful and everlaſting rewarder of them.

LECTURE II.

PSALM II.

OF all the changes that took place in the civil government of the Jewiſh nation, that of the kingly one may be reckoned the moſt ſignal. It was introduced, not directly by the divine appointment; but by permiſſion, when the people, then under a *theocracy*, or the immediate government of God, were bent upon having a viſible king to bear the chief rule among them, and have the command of their armies when led forth to the field againſt their enemies. Being left to the choice of the perſon to fill this high ſtation, they elected Saul, the ſon of *Kiſh*, of the tribe of *Benjamin*. To this election, made at the will of the people, an aſſent was given by Samuel, having the divine authority for it; but, along with it, a remonſtrance was made againſt the precipitant and unhallowed procedure of the people in this moſt important tranſaction. Saul, however, was anointed by Samuel, in a private manner, that the example might not be ſet in Iſrael, of a king being admitted without ſuch a ſacred conſecration; which would have been equal to a public renunciation of their allegiance to God, as their Supreme Potentate, and Sovereign Ruler; whoſe holy law, both in its religious and civil inſtitutions, was to be ſtrictly obſerved and obeyed by them, and their children; otherwiſe, a forfeiture would be incurred of the divine protection and favour to them as a nation, and all the temporal bleſſings conſequent to it: I ſay, of the *temporal* bleſſings promiſed to them; becauſe, although there would be a diminution, or an entire deprivation of theſe, in caſe of their diſobe-

dience and apoſtacy; yet, with reſpect to God's holy and ſpiritual covenant, made with the eternal ſon of his love, coming forth in the name and character of the *Meſſiah*, or the anointed one of God, for ſalvation to ſinful mankind, believing on him as a Redeemer, it was declared, that there could be no *diſannulling* or making it void; in whatever manner the Jewiſh nation, and their rulers, ſhould behave, and even though the length of rejecting, and they went through a carnal and fatal blindneſs, of putting to death their Divine and ever Bleſſed Redeemer.

Still to them, firſt, the word of ſalvation was to be ſent. The Saviour himſelf was to come to his holy hill in Zion, as the appointed place of his ſtation and miniſtry upon earth. Hence the bleſſings derived from this holy covenant, ratified by the appearance of the *Meſſiah* in the human nature, are called, by way of diſtinction, from the temporal and changeable ones, the *ſure* mercies *of*, or promiſed to David; he being a *king* choſen of God, and alſo to be a *type*, (by the ſingular circumſtance of his elevation to the royalty in Iſrael), of that divine perſon, who, in the prophetical writings, is ſometimes called *his Son*, but to whom David himſelf gives the title of *his Lord*, in the 110th Pſalm.

The reign of *Saul*, as it was inaufpicious in its beginning, proved, in ſeveral reſpects, as uncomfortable to himſelf and his houſe as it was diſadvantageous to Iſrael; yet, while he conformed to the counſels of Samuel, it was not without favour from heaven; as ſeveral ſignal victories were obtained over the *Philiſtines*, who grievouſly oppreſſed the people of Iſrael. But it appeared that this unhappy prince had often a ſtruggle with himſelf to yield obedience to the Oracle of God, either when ſignified to him by the prieſts, performing ſacrifices, or delivered by Samuel. He affected, although with fear, to govern by himſelf, and to have that ſupreme authority of which he ſaw the heathen princes around him poſſeſſed. It was to be made manifeſt, that ſuch independency was inadmiſſible in Iſrael, and eſpecially that their firſt king ſhould not be tainted with

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this ambition. It became fatal to Saul; who, from diſappointed hopes, was ſeized with a melancholy ſpirit. In his lifetime David, the youngeſt ſon of *Jeſſe*, hardly yet in puberty, was, by the ſpecial command and direction of God, ſet apart for the royalty, and, as a teſtimony of it, anointed by Samuel. That the conſequence of this was, his being endowed with a ſpirit and heart, ſuch as became one devoted to the ſervice of God, his early years teſtified; and the perſecutions he afterwards underwent from Saul's jealouſy and implacable hatred, was a proof, that when God deſtines any of the children of men for ſome eminent purpoſe of his providence, ſuch a choſen one is fully qualified for whatever is to be performed. But in the caſe of David, more than what related to the temporal felicity of the Jewiſh nation, was to be exhibited. To him was given ſuch a prophetical ſpirit, as enabled him to compoſe moſt of thoſe Pſalms, which were either to be ſung publicly in the congregations of Iſrael, about the *tabernacle* of God, or what might teſtify to individuals the experiences he had of the influence of a religious principle, and the fear of the Moſt High. Hence ſeveral of them are *penitential*, but more of them *conſolatory* and joyous. Of this latter kind is the Pſalm now read; nay, its import is more. It contains a defiance to all the enemies of religion, whether of the foreign and heathen nations, or the domeſtic ones in Iſrael, to ſubvert that ſanctuary which God had eſtabliſhed, in a marvellous manner, in Jeruſalem and Zion; which laſt, as it was the ſtrong *munition* of a natural rock, accounted impregnable by enemies; ſo it was an *emblem* of the far more mighty power of the ever living God, that would be diſplayed for the ſafety of Iſrael; and who had declared, *This is my reſt, and here I will ſtay; no weapon formed, and employed againſt this place, ſhall proſper. For ſo I have ſworn unto David;* who, as he ſhall ſubdue his enemies round about, is ſet forth, as *a figure* of that ſpiritual and higher ſalvation which *he* whom I have declared, in a more proper and exalted ſenſe, *my Son*, will accompliſh for all who believe on him, *and truſt in him*, as their

Spiritual

Spiritual Rock and their refuge. Let us now conſider and explain the verſes in their order.

VERSES 1. 2. and 3.—The Pſalm is introduced, as I obſerved already, in the ſtyle of expoſtulation, or defiance, in the name and words of the God of Iſrael. David is only the rehearſer of what was, by the *Divine Spirit*, dictated to him upon the occaſion of his being nominated by the divine approbation to take the *royalty* or *kingdom* of *Iſrael*, which was declared to be *rent from Saul* and his family; as we read in the Firſt book of Samuel, chap. xv. ver. 28. This I take to be, in all probability, the period at, or ſoon after, which the Pſalm before us was compoſed. It was highly fit and proper that ſuch an anounciation ſhould be then made of the divine will, in transferring the royal ſcepter to David, as might not only authoriſe his aſſumption of it upon the death of Saul, but ſtrike terror into all thoſe who ſhould dare to revolt or conſpire againſt it. Such oppoſition, however, was to be expected from the heathen nations, who had found, to their diſmay, what a determined and courageous enemy, to them and their idolatry, David had always proved himſelf; and they wiſhed rather to have to do with ſuch a prince as *Saul*, weak in counſel and unequal in mind. To them might be joined thoſe of the *people of Iſrael*, who lived upon the borders of Judea; and, by commerce with the Philiſtines, Hittites, and Amorites, were inclined to adopt their impious rites of religion: At any rate, a conteſt about the *royalty* in Iſrael was what thoſe impious nations deſired to behold and foment. They believed the time was now come, when they could join in league, and eaſily overwhelm a divided nation. Their arrogance, and preſumption of ſucceſs, is emphatically noted by their being ſaid *to be in rage* to begin their enterpriſe, and by their kings and rulers drawing together in counſel, and ſaying, contemptuouſly, *Let us at once break their bands aſunder, and caſt away their cords from us.*

" Their religious worſhip and national ſtrength we hold in equal

" diſdain.

" diſdain. Now is the happy conjuncture for ridding ourſelves of all " fear about the power of their God, and his protection of them. So " the heathen kings of the earth have often ſaid in the days of their " proſperity, and from the pride of their hearts; our arm of fleſh and " our policy are ſufficient to rule the nations of the world. We are " ſet up in place of deities to them; and we will be regarded and ador- " ed as ſuch. Let none ſpeak or think of a ſovereign ruler above us in " the kingdoms of men. And who is this *God of Iſrael, that we* " *ſhould fear him?*" To this inſane boaſting the Pſalmiſt replies, verſes 4. and 5. *He that ſitteth in the heavens ſhall laugh. The Lord ſhall have them in deriſion. Then ſhall he ſpeak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his ſore diſpleaſure.* Theſe words, uſed by the Pſalmiſt to expreſs the contempt and indignation of the Deity againſt a race of impious and audacious mortals, are not to be underſtood literally, but to be ſpoken after the manner of men, who are agitated with various and contrary paſſions. Human ideas, as well as human language, are inadequate to denote the movements of the divine mind; and therefore, from the weakneſs of our conceptions, we often can do no more than ſpeak of him *as having like emotions or paſſions with ourſelves*; while, at the ſame time, we are ſenſible and underſtand how unworthy this is of his exalted and glorious nature. There appears, however, to be a propriety in the Pſalmiſt's expreſſions, if we conſider them as directed to the ignorant and blinded worſhippers of *idol* deities; whom they conceived to have only local and partial powers, and, along with this imbecillity, all the variation and caprice of paſſion found in human breaſts, and of which wiſe and good men are often aſhamed.

Had the Pſalmiſt, in anſwer to their inſults, expreſſed himſelf in the *intellectual* and ſublime manner he does in many paſſages of this inſpired book, with reſpect to the invariability and ſerene conſtancy of the Divine Being, and his immutable ideas, and views of all his creatures and their actions, and beheld at once by him, either as approveable or hateful, his words would have been utterly unintelligible to them.

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He, therefore, only marks to them the omnipotent power of the God of Iſrael, by his having his throne, or the place of his more immediate preſence, in *Heaven*, and therefore exalted in ſovereignty and dominion over this lower world; and of whom all impious and ſinful men had reaſon to ſtand in awe, leſt they ſhould be either objects of his diſdain or of his more awful judgments, from the reach of which all their vain and fooliſh devices could never deliver them. They may be convinced of this, adds the Pſalmiſt, by what they now ſee done, in ſpite of all their plots and combinations: For, ſays the Almighty, verſe 6th, *I have ſet my King upon my holy hill of Zion.*

In the face of what violent oppoſition from Saul's family, and moſt of the tribes of Iſrael their adherents, this was effectuated, the Sacred Hiſtory of the ſecond book of Samuel bears record. David being, ſoon after Saul's death, anointed and choſen King over the houſe and tribe of Judah; ſeven years of conteſt and hoſtility paſt, before the other tribes of *Iſrael* came to *Hebron* and ſubmitted themſelves to his government, as we read, 2d Samuel, Chap. v. and 1ſt and 2d verſes.

This reunion of the twelve tribes of Iſrael, under David, was a moſt ſignal and happy event, manifeſtly brought about by the will and interpoſed power of God. It was immediately followed with the taking of the *ſtrong* hold of Zion, thenceforth called *the city of David;* whoſe proſperous reign, over the united tribes of Judah and Iſrael, was prolonged for the courſe of three and thirty years. When conſidered in all its circumſtances, it muſt be pronounced a highly favoured and dignified one. His elevation to the throne, by the declared will of God, the ſucceſs given him in all his warlike enterpriſes, the renown he acquired abroad, by repeated victories, over his and Iſrael's enemies, the domeſtic wealth he attained, and, what was far more precious, the divine aſſurance he had, that the ſceptre of Judah ſhould be continued long in the line of his poſterity, *and not depart from one or other of them*, until, according to the inſpired

prediction

prediction of old and dying Jacob, Geneſis, chap. xlix. and 10, *one* ſhould come to whom the peculiar name of *Shiloh* would be applicable. Theſe circumſtances, ſo honourable and advantageous, I ſay, may be juſtly regarded both as the fulfilment and the amount of all the *temporal* or outward mercies promiſed to David and his houſe. Benefits of this kind, however, to be prized as the gifts of God, the Pſalmiſt knew to have, from the divine determination, with reſpect to all worldly objects, a certain boundary, both as to their continuance and their extent. Nothing earthly was accounted, by him, to be ever ſtable and permanent, except the ever bleſſed mercies and benefits of God's holy covenant, revealed to Iſrael in the divine law and teſtimony, ſolemnly declared unto them. He knew that, in the revolution of time, the *heavens* themſelves, that are viſible, *would wax old as a garment, and as a veſture they would be changed, and that the throne of God, in its celeſtial glory, only was from everlaſting to everlaſting ages.* Therefore, ſays he, Pſalm xlvi. 1. *God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midſt of the ſea. There is a river, the ſtreams whereof ſhall make glad the city of God; the holy place of the tabernacles of the moſt High. God is in the midſt of her; ſhe ſhall not be moved: God ſhall help her, and that right early.*

That the Pſalmiſt could entertain no expectation or belief, that the ſceptre lifted up in *Judah*, and by the divine favour aſſigned to him and his houſe, was a worldly one, and ſuch as would authoriſe and enable him and them to ſubjugate and bear rule over the heathen nations, and, upon the coming of the *Meſſiah*, to be extended in an earthly ſway to the uttermoſt parts of the world, we may be convinced by conſulting chap. vii. of the 2d book of Samuel. There, although a record is made of all the gracious promiſes to David and his ſon Solomon, and their deſcendents, in their capacity of temporal princes, not a word to that purpoſe is to be found. So far from any ſuch intimation, it is ſignified, by the prophet Nathan, to David,

that God having given him reſt, round about, from all his enemies, and ſet him as a king in his fortreſs of Zion, and cauſed him to have a name like unto the name of the great men upon earth, he had ſufficient reaſon to be contented with that meaſure of earthly glory, without aſpiring to more, or vainly placing his honour and felicity, or that of *Iſrael*, in the conqueſt of other kingdoms and nations; a culpable ambition, in which he and his ſucceſſors would be outdone by various *princes of the world;* who had no knowledge, thought, or deſire, of any object, good, or truly great, beyond its tranſient vanities. But it became a people, taken into peculiar favour with God, as Iſrael was, to know, that to render due praiſe unto him, who, by a ſeries of miraculous works, had proved himſelf their only *ſtrength and their ſtay*, and to keep up and maintain his worſhip and ſervice among them, was not only a ſacred obligation, but their higheſt honour and glory. Hence David, in the chapter laſt cited, and when in prayer before God, confeſſed, *that it was for his word's ſake, and according to his own heart or good will, that God had done all theſe great things, to make him, as his ſervant, know them; and that there was none like the Lord God of Iſrael, nor any God beſide him, according to all that they had heard with their ears: For he had redeemed Iſrael from Egypt, and from the nations and their Gods, that his name might be magnified in Zion for ever. Thou haſt alſo ſpoken*, ſaid David, *of thy ſervant's houſe for a great while to come, and that it may continue for ever before thee. Be it done as thou haſt ſaid; and with thy bleſſing let it be bleſſed for ever.*

By David it was undoubtedly underſtood and known, even without the ſpirit of prophecy, from the peruſal of the Moſaic Scriptures, that although it had been declared by Jacob, divinely inſpired, *that the ſceptre ſhould not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet* (that is, one deſcended from him) *until Shiloh came;* yet, at this diſtinguiſhable aera, which was not to enſue *for a great while to come*, or after many generations, it would then be let fall, *and depart.* No longer than while the great ends and objects of the divine

vine revelation, made to Iſrael, were promoted by the ſpecial protection and favour afforded by God to that people and their kings, was it to be expected, that thoſe outward and oſtenſible mercies, and privileges, were to be continued among them, but to be laid aſide and to ceaſe. Hence the great and eminent diſplay of them was confined to the two reigns of David and his ſon Solomon. Then, and only then, was beheld, to the admiration and envy of the heathen nations around, what luſtre of proſperity, what enjoyment of domeſtic peace and worldly wealth, the only true and living God could, at his pleaſure, impart to a nation which had the honour of having his adorable perfections revealed to them, and being made the viſible guardians of his *holy law and ſanctuary*. But leſt they ſhould indulge that pride and preſumption of the human heart, which is too naturally produced in ſuch circumſtances of elevation and proſperity, and imagine that an extended empire, and a ſovereign dominion over other nations of the world, were deſtined for them; the duration of their ſignal aggrandiſement was cut ſhort, and in a manner, and by a cataſtrophe, ſufficient to quench all hopes of its being reſtored; when, in conſequence of Jeroboam's conteſt for the royalty upon Solomon's death, a woeful revolution took place, and ten of the twelve tribes of Iſrael were ſeparated from *Judah*, and conſtituted into a diſtinct kingdom, which was never after united again to that of *Jeruſalem*.

VERSES 7. and 8.—*I will declare the decree: the Lord hath ſaid unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Aſk of me, and I ſhall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion.*—But however clear and manifeſt, it appears that there was no promiſe made, or any view given, in the ſcriptural record of the Divine Will and purpoſes reſpecting mankind, of an earthly kingdom, that was either perpetual in duration, or univerſal in extent, being allotted to, or intended for, the moſt favoured of their families or tribes; yet, in theſe verſes, it muſt

be owned, that the Pſalmiſt expreſſes himſelf in words, which, if literally taken, might lead to a different opinion upon the point. But ſurely the expreſſions, *Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee*, cannot, in any proper or competent ſenſe, be underſtood literally, and without a figure, as applicable to David; who only, in a myſtical and ſpiritual meaning, could be declared a Son, or one begotten of God, by the grace diſpenſed in his ſanctuary, as other eminent ſervants of God were alſo, in Scripture, denominated his ſons, or children by regeneration, and the ſupernatural gifts conferred upon them.

Yet ſtill it muſt be owned, that there is a peculiarity in the expreſſions, *this day have I begotten thee;* which has no parallel in what we find ſaid in the Scripture of Moſes, *by whoſe mouth God ſpoke all the words of his holy law*, or of any other prophet raiſed up and inſpired to declare the Divine Will and purpoſes in Iſrael, from Moſes's death, to the time of David's being choſen and anointed king and ruler over the twelve tribes of Jacob. But admitting that, on account of his being inveſted with the character both of a king and a prophet, he might be ſpoken of in terms which, although typically underſtood, are uſed to none of the moſt diſtinguiſhed ſervants of God; there is a difficulty in the explication of the 8th verſe, in which it is ſaid, *Aſk of me, and I ſhall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, &c.* and to this it is added, *Thou ſhalt break them with a rod of iron; thou ſhalt daſh them in pieces like a potter's veſſel.*

It was certainly incompetent to David to aſk or expect any more of earthly power and dominion, or of conqueſts and victory over the heathen nations, than the meaſure of them that conſiſted with the good pleaſure of God, and anſwered the ends of his glory, and the gradual manifeſtation and advancement of his kingdom of grace and righteouſneſs in the world. The arguments already adduced to prove that the Pſalmiſt had very different and more worthy conceptions of that kingdom of God, which, in conſequence of the covenant of grace, was to be eſtabliſhed among men, than of its being

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one of worldly grandeur, hardly require further confirmation; yet a remarkable paſſage to this purpoſe, in the 110th Pſalm, may here be quoted; the ſtrain and ſentiments of which are allowed by all interpreters to correſpond with, and have near affinity to, theſe now under conſideration. The former, indeed, appears to be a copy of the latter, more illuſtrated; in reſpect of the nature of that dominion, which the perſon here dignified with the *name of a Son, begotten of God*, was appointed to attain over the blinded and ungodly nations. For, although in the Pſalm cited he is ſaid to be *One exalted at the right hand of the Divine Majeſty, until his enemies were made as a footſtool unto him; and that, for their being ſo ſubjected, the Lord would ſend out of Zion the rod of his ſtrength*; yet, it is added, ver. 3. *Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power*; a plain intimation that, beſides the rod of chaſtiſement ſtretched over the heads of the rebellious and incorrigible, and by which, as is here ſaid, they might be daſhed in pieces in a moment, like a potter's veſſel when ſtruck with an iron rod; there would be ſeen a wonderful effect produced in the minds of many. The heavenly word of grace, and peace ſent forth, would be found powerful to engage them to harken to and receive it with faith and love, and to ſay from their hearts, *Behold, out of Zion God has commanded redemption for his people, and made the children of men to know the great ſalvation wrought for the humble and the penitent. Come, then, let us walk in the light of the Lord. For bleſſed is the people who hear the joyful ſound of his word*, and believe according to the promiſe made to Abraham, *That in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed*, Gen. xxii. 18. which promiſe was repeated to the fathers of *Iſrael, Iſaac*, and *Jacob*; until a moſt ſignal confirmation of it was given in the ceremonial part of the *Divine Law*, adminiſtered by the hand of Moſes to that people. Its peculiar inſtitutions not only ſerved as a fence to keep them from the groſs idolatry and impure rites of the heathen worſhip, but afforded figurative views of the covenant of grace, and expreſſed, in types and emblems, its highly precious and extenſive

benefits,

benefits, and alſo the perſonal dignity and characteriſtical excellencies of the bleſſed *procurer* of them.

Theſe laſt might be, and were, properly held forth in the miſſion and offices of ſome of the eminent ſervants and prophets of God, both before and under the diſpenſation of the law; yet ſtill ſuch repreſentations muſt be owned to be, in ſeveral reſpects, imperfect and defective. If divine and ſpiritual things could only be repreſented *darkly*, and as it were *through a glaſs*, by material and ſenſible images, this muſt be as much the caſe when heavenly *natures* and *perſons*, and their characters and functions, are ſignified and alluded to by the higheſt and moſt excellent of earthly and temporal ones. Thus *Moſes*, and Aaron, and Samuel, and David, although the moſt dignified perſonages under the law, and whoſe characters and offices prefigured thoſe of the Redeemer to be ſent forth into Zion, did not and could not exhibit them but in an inadequate and partial manner. In no one of them were conjoined the offices of prophet, prieſt, and king; the union of which, in the perſon of the promiſed *Meſſiah*, was to mark him as one exalted in honour and dignity above them all. If David could be declared a ſon begotten of God, in the ſenſe that has been explained, yet there was a generation peculiar, and only appropriated to that divine perſon, to be called, when he appeared in the world, *Emmanuel*, *God with us*, or Deity united to the human nature; and his generation, therefore, ſays the Prophet *Iſaiah*, *who can declare?* A ſignification of it is underſtood to be given in the *title* of *Shiloh*; which expreſſes his being one who was to come in time, by an ineffable generation, into the world of men; but who had a precedent perſonality, and that of a nature the moſt exalted, and ſuch priority of exiſtence as was reducible to no computation of time; and ſo was to be referred to the one *indiviſible day of eternity*. Therefore the Apoſtle, in his Epiſtle to the Hebrews, chap. i. when he repreſents the perſonal excellence, both of nature and generation, appertaining to the *only begotten of the Father*, as far tranſcending what was declared of the higheſt order of created beings, might juſtly,

and

and with all propriety, underſtand and apply, as he does, this remarkable text, in ſupport and confirmation of his doctrine. For if to none of the angels of God it was ſaid by him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*; far leſs could this be ſpoken of, or to David, or Solomon, or any ſon of Adam, the avouched progenitor of mankind, unleſs typically, and in a figurative manner. The Apoſtle, after ſtating the import of the declaration, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, adds further, that this *firſt begotten* of the Father, when brought into the world, or revealed in the human nature, would, in this ſtate of humiliation, loſe nothing of the eſſential honour and dignity of his adorable filiation; for even then it would be fulfilled more eminently than was ſaid and done to Solomon the ſon of David, that *God would be to him a father, and he to him a ſon.* The proof of this would be rendered moſt illuſtriouſly apparent in the view of men and angels, when, after being made a ſacrifice for the ſins of mankind, and taſting of a temporal death in the body, he was brought again into life as *The firſt born from the dead, that in all things he might be ſeen to have the pre-eminence*, and in his glorified human nature, the command might come forth from on high, *Let all the angels of God worſhip him*, Coloſſ. i. 18.

VERSES 10. and 11.—*Be wiſe now, therefore, O ye kings: be inſtructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*—In theſe words the Pſalmiſt gives an admonition to the princes of the world, who placed all their glory in the admired, but deceitful luſtre of their crowns, and the ſuperior extent of their power and dominion over tribes and nations of the earth, which they vainly conſidered as the acquiſitions of their martial ſpirit and policy, and what they could maintain, and tranſmit unſhaken to their poſterity for many generations: As if it had been ſaid by the Pſalmiſt, ſince the ſtrength of your armies, by overthrowing and *razing* other cities and kingdoms, has made you to be feared for a time, may and ought not the obvious and juſt reflection upon what you have

have ſeen and heard of the changeful ſtate of all human affairs, which no might or wiſdom of man can prevent, teach much more you to *ſtand in awe* and fear, leſt, on account of your not acknowledging, but conſpiring againſt the worſhip of that Deity, who ruleth ever by his *power*, in the heavens above, and in the earth below, and appoints what changes he pleaſes in the kingdoms of men, you ſhould be made ſenſible of his ſovereign dominion, by an overturn of your proſperity in ſome ſudden and tremenduous manner? As far as you ſtand in the place of arbiters of right and wrong, and what is juſt and unjuſt in the laws appointed for the diſpenſing of juſtice in human ſocieties, it is incumbent upon you alſo to have regard to the principles of equity and impartiality in your deciſions; knowing, as you ought to do, and remembering always, that there *is a God in the heavens*, who, being the *one almighty Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, has ſet his throne for righteous judgment* over all men, and takes a particular account of the procedure and actions of thoſe upon whom a ſpecies of this judicial authority is conferred, and of whom its conſcientious and proper exerciſe is required; ſo that ſuch judgment, as they have diſpenſed to men ſubject to them, will be, finally, rendered to them again. Let, therefore, a conſtant ſenſe of his all ſeeing eye, that obſerves the evil and the good, and reprobates the one and approves the other, impreſs your minds with a becoming and holy fear; leſt your religious ſervices, being inſincere, or ſuch as he has not required, may excite his diſpleaſure; or the unſeemly and deluding tranſports of your minds, in the day of proſperity, make you forgetful of the duties you owe to him, who hath appointed it for proper improvement, by the more enlarged exerciſe of virtue and goodneſs; and, in the caſe of contrary behaviour, may juſtly, by a ſtroke from his hand, turn your inſolent rejoicing into ſorrow and grief.

VERSE 12.—*Kiſs the ſon, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Bleſſed are all they that put*

put their truſt in him.—The concluſion of the pſalm in theſe words is remarkable, and has much propriety, when underſtood as denoting the advent of the *Meſſiah* into the world, that Son owned of God to have had a generation before all ages, and to be revealed by another in time. He will come, ſays the Pſalmiſt, as the meſſenger of peace, and, being the party in the covenant of grace and mercy to mankind, to announce the word *of reconciliation*, and declare all the happy effects of it to the world. It therefore becomes both Jews and Gentiles, and the people of every tribe and nation, to receive him with the *kiſs of holy affection*, ſaying, from heartfelt gratitude, reverence, and love, Bleſſed is he who *cometh*, *in the name* of the Lord, *to ſave* and deliver us from our ſtate of guilt and miſery.

Yet it was likely to be the caſe, and had been foretold by the Prophets, that the Jewiſh nation, to whom the word of this ſpiritual ſalvation was *firſt* to be declared, and from a tribe of whom, and in the royal line of David, the Meſſiah was to come in the aſſumed veil of his human nature, would be diſpoſed to reject, with diſdain, the Redeemer of Iſrael, on account of the humble garb worn by him in the world. Inſtead of the *enſigns* of an earthly Prince, or the leaſt ſhow or affectation of worldly honour and glory; humility, ſelf-denial, and condeſcenſion, and all the offices of one who was ſtudious, by his word and doctrine, to enlighten men's minds in the knowledge of that ſalvation appointed for them in the counſels of God, and by his miniſtry and ſufferings, to be accompliſhed for them, were the graces which adorned his unparalleled character and actions. But, to worldly minded men, the ſenſe of their expediency and beauty would be loſt. From pride in their peculiar privileges, and a ſelfiſh ſpirit, the Jews could not brook the free opening of the door of God's ſanctuary to the Gentile nations. *Therefore*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, in prophetic admonition, *ye guides and rulers of Iſrael*, know the dignity of his perſon and character, whom, in the blindneſs of your minds, and the hardneſs of your hearts, you may ſpurn, and ſeek to deſtroy: For, although

he be the *Prince of Peace*, ſent down from heaven to earth to procure that ſpiritual ſalvation to a ſinful world, otherwiſe unattainable; yet, if he be not owned by you, and received as that *holy One* ordained and promiſed by God from the beginning, to *bruiſe the head of the Serpent*, and overthrow the works of the enemy of mankind, know, that to him the Deity hath ſaid, *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footſtool:* For he *is ſet as King upon God's holy hill of Zion, for mercy* firſt, and then *for righteous judgment.* Let his adverſaries fear, therefore, leſt their culpable prejudices, and criminal refuſal of him in the character of a Redeemer of the ſouls of men, from their ſins and tranſgreſſions, involve them in a moſt awful condemnation, even that which is due to thoſe who, as if in league with the *wicked one*, deny the neceſſity or the wiſdom of that plan which a merciful God hath contrived for the great and everlaſting redemption of the fallen race of Adam. But all thoſe who ſay from their hearts, *It is the doing of the Lord, and wonderful in our eyes, we will place our whole hope and truſt in it*, ſhall know what a bleſſed effect will ariſe from their faith; *for, as the heaven is high above the earth, ſo great is his mercy upon them who fear him*; and that he hath cauſed the light of his ſanctuary to ſhine forth in Zion, not for the benefit of Judah and Iſrael only, but for that of all nations whom he has made, that they and his people *may rejoice together.* Therefore, even now, the Kings of *Tarſhiſh and of the Iſles ſhall bring preſents, the Kings of Sheba and Sebah ſhall offer gifts.* They ſhall come and ſee in what manner the God of Iſrael is worſhipped in the *beauty of his holineſs*; and learn how becoming the natural or moral perfections of the Supreme Being, that religious adoration and ſervice is, which his holy law and commandments require. They ſhall bluſh and be aſhamed for the *groves* and the *altars* of their idol gods, which profane the name of rational devotion. Converts they muſt become to the worſhip of the Father of their ſpirits, *or be blotted out of the book of life.* But while, in his praiſe, Iſrael ſhall ſay daily, *He is God indeed, and*

there

there is no other beſides him; he hath made us, and not we ourſelves; the *heavens* are his, and the *earth alſo;* as for the *world*, and the *fulneſs thereof*, he hath *founded and eſtabliſhed them;* ſuch a people ſhall be bleſſed; they ſhall rejoice, and walk on through life, in the light of his countenance; and, finally, when death comes, it *ſhall be well with them:* For he who is the giver and fountain of natural life, hath redeemed the ſouls of his ſervants from the power of death and the grave, and declared them to be heirs of that life which is ſpiritual and eternal; through the grace and mercy found in him, who had authority to ſay, *As I live for evermore, ye ſhall live alſo.*

LECTURE III.

PSALM IV.

IT muſt be owned, that the taſtes, ſentiments, and paſſions of human minds are various, and may be directed to different objects. The man void of a religious diſpoſition, and who entertains no impreſſions of this kind, if candid, cannot deny that they are no leſs natural than his own, and that the pleaſure derived from them, although not reliſhed by him, or at all known to him, may yet be equal or ſuperior to that he is acquainted with. If it be only granted, that there is a propenſity found in human minds which inclines them to ſentiments of piety, and to prefer them to all others, religion cannot be ſaid to want its proper foundation, or to be obtruded or forced upon the heart of man, more than any other internal feeling of which it is ſuſceptible. Nay, may not thoſe be juſtly ac-

counted tyrants of the worſt kind, who would, if they had it in their power, rob the human heart of the pleaſures of religion. May they not be reckoned to exerciſe a domination over it more arbitrary, groſs, and inſolent, than thoſe rude conquerors did, who condemned, as inſignificant, all taſtes and manners, all ſtudies and knowledge, but their own. When therefore we peruſe, in the houſe of worſhip, a Pſalm or religious compoſition, ſuch as has been now read, it muſt be ſuppoſed that we have a diſpoſition to piety and devotion, although not equal in degree, yet ſimilar to what the Pſalmiſt felt; and that we wiſh, with him, to revive thoſe too often interrupted ſentiments of religion, and, catching ſome ſparks of his heavenly flame, to root them deeper in our minds. This Pſalm is the more adapted to this purpoſe, as the inſpired penman not only appears delighted with his ſubject, but alſo with the ſtate of his own ſoul and heart, devoted as it was to the honour and ſervice of the Deity, and declares that he felt a ſatisfaction in it far ſuperior to that which worldly men can ever enjoy.

VERSE 1.—*Hear me when I call, O God of my righteouſneſs: thou haſt enlarged me when I was in diſtreſs; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*—One chief benefit ariſing from religion is, that it proves the conſolation of the mind in diſtreſs. It is the only one adapted to the human heart, when labouring under a preſſure of anxiety and trouble. When the means of relief cannot be found in external things; when all human help and power fails; when even the tender and ſympathiſing conſolations of the beſt friend upon earth have loſt their ſalutary influence; a ſenſe of God as a protector, a perception of him as the hearer of prayer, muſt afford a moſt ſenſible and powerful aid and ſtay. It is the happineſs of the godly man, in every extremity, that he can addreſs himſelf to the ſovereign ruler of the world, and ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *hear me when I call.* It appears from this ſtrain of ſupplication, uſed by the Pſalmiſt, that he made God his refuge in all caſes of danger; and that, when condemned

demned and perſecuted by men in the world, he could appeal to him, as the *God of his righteouſneſs*, the all ſeeing witneſs, and the impartial judge of the integrity of his heart, and the purity of his conduct. The true worſhippers of God can never forget that he is a God of righteouſneſs, and that, if they regard iniquity in their hearts, he will not hear them. Whatever other goodneſs they may pretend to, although it be made up of every outward form and ſhew of devotion, yet, if it be not the *righteouſneſs he hath choſen*, if it be not the religion of the heart, which he hath declared to be acceptable to him, it will ſtand them in no ſtead: For, to thoſe who ſet up, or profeſs, a righteouſneſs unſuitable to his perfections, he ſays, *when you ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes; when you make many prayers, I will not hear you.* But the Pſalmiſt, well inſtructed in that righteouſneſs God required of his ſervants, had experienced his gracious acceptance of it, by the divine protection afforded to him, and his enlargement in diſtreſs.

VERSE 2.—*O ye ſons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into ſhame? how long will ye love vanity, and ſeek after leaſing? Selah.*—In theſe words it is underſtood, by moſt interpreters, that the Pſalmiſt gives a reproof to the high and proud ones of the earth, called often, in Scripture, *the ſons of men*, who looked with contempt upon the anointing he had received from Samuel, to the royal dignity and office, when he was placed in a very humble condition of life, and had no outward power to ſupport him in aſcending the throne. This the Pſalmiſt calls *his glory*, as it was the appointment of God in his behalf, an evidence of the divine favour, and what would lay a ſure foundation for his future honour and exaltation in Iſrael. But thoſe who boaſted themſelves of their wealth and power, had often, and long, made this ſacred unction he had received, the ſubject of their deriſive mirth and ſcorn. They ridiculed him for his faith and truſt in God, as extravagant and hopeleſs; and he, with much more propriety and juſtice, retorts upon them their incorrigible

corrigible diſpoſition to vanity, and their admiration of, and conteſts about the unſtable and fading glories of this world, as if in them were to be placed their only and chief good; yet, how often were they known to paſs away, like the cloud of the morning, with the firſt riſing gale? Such as counted upon the certain continuance of them, would be found to have believed a lye, and that of the moſt pernicious kind; ſince it tended to the blinding of their minds, and the hardening of their hearts, againſt the proper and juſt impreſſions of God's ſovereign dominion in the kingdoms of men, which are *raiſed up and plucked down*, according to his pleaſure; and, in this procedure, as his wiſdom and righteouſneſs are ever to be revered and acknowledged; ſo, in reſpect of his protection and favour to individuals, the ſame rule of conduct is obſerved; and, therefore, although *many may be the troubles and trials of the righteous man, yet the Lord delivereth him out of them all;* or renders them ſubſervient to his ſpirtual and everlaſting good.

VERSE 3.—*But know that the Lord hath ſet apart him that is godly for himſelf: the Lord will hear when I call unto him.*—The Pſalmiſt, in this verſe, expreſſes, emphatically, the hope and truſt he had in God, as able to accompliſh all the gracious purpoſes of his will with reſpect to him. "Ye would," ſays he, "perſuade me that I am deſ-"titute of friends, without aid or ſupport, and deſpicable in the eyes "of men. But it is ſufficient, for my comfort, to know, that God, by a "ſpecial appointment, hath ſelected me for the purpoſes of his honour "and praiſe in Iſrael. To him, therefore, I refer the event of things, and "am well aſſured, from the experience of his goodneſs, that, if trouble "is nigh, if dangers preſent themſelves, my protector will not be far off, "*he will hear when I call upon him.*" There is no aid or incitement to courage and fortitude ſo ſtrong and powerful as that which a ſenſe of religion inſpires. The ſhield and the buckler, the ſkill and the diſcipline of war, are inconſiderable compared to it. What do theſe avail, when the heart is not animated with a truſt and confi-

dence,

dence, that no danger can be ſo great or imminent, no ſuffering ſo extreme, but the Almighty power and grace of the Moſt High can command deliverance from it. In the midſt of the ſecret machinations, or open aſſaults of his foes, the Pſalmiſt found his heart not only raiſed above fear, but confident that God would grant him the protection that was requiſite; and that the purpoſes he had in ordaining him to the kingly office, could not be turned aſide. It is the hope, nay the truſt, of all true ſervants of God, in like manner, that ſo far as they conſider themſelves as called to act, and miniſter to the honour and praiſe of God in the world, and conform their behaviour to this end, they ſhall find the favour of his grace and help afforded to them, *and his ſtrength made perfect in the midſt of their natural weakneſs.*

VERSE 4.—*Stand in awe, and ſin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be ſtill.*—In this verſe the Pſalmiſt gives the proper admonition to the ungodly and worldly minded men who put their truſt in their riches, and had not the fear of God before them. You think, ſays he, that you are ſufficiently ſecured againſt any change in your lot, ſo that the day of adverſity cannot overtake you. You have the preſumption to believe that you may go on in your own ways, without a check or controul from the Witneſs and the Judge of the actions of all men; but in this very preſumption your danger lies; while you ſay within your hearts, the Lord does not ſee, neither does he regard, what is done by us his rational creatures. This your impiety, this your denial of his moral perfections, may and will bring the ſtroke of his juſt judgment againſt you. *Stand in awe of it therefore*, ſince, under his righteous government, ſin is not ſuffered to go on to a height unpuniſhed. As it is committed in contempt of the divine law, and in oppoſition to the holineſs of God, you muſt be objects of his wrath, and liable to all its dreadful effects. Forbear, then, the practice of iniquity as your greateſt evil. But this can never be properly and effectually done, unleſs you make it

it your buſineſs to *commune with your own hearts*, in thoſe ſeaſons when tranquillity and retirement may enable you to ſet your thoughts in order, and review your ſentiments and actions in a cool and impartial manner. Nothing is more adverſe to ſelf-examination and amendment, than being engaged in the hurry and buſtle of the world. It is this that gives ſtrength and vigour to the corrupt paſſions of men, puts to ſilence the voice of conſcience, and ſtifles the ſenſe of duty. And therefore the ſinful and ungodly chooſe to take this courſe, and keep at the greateſt diſtance from all ſober and ſedate reflection. But where this is exerciſed, where men are diſpoſed, according to the Pſalmiſt's admonition, to hold ſecret converſe with their hearts, and inquire into the principles and motives of their conduct, and conſider how far theſe are correſpondent to the dictates of reaſon, to the acknowledged rules of duty, or the precepts of the divine law, a very different effect is produced. The impetuoſity of the ſinful paſſions is reſtrained; objects are no longer beheld in the falſe light in which thoſe deceivers of the mind repreſented them. The very thought of what pleaſed it before, and gained approbation, now fills it with averſion and diſguſt. Inordinate love of the world, ambition, envy, pride, and malice, are made to ſubſide. In the calm mirror of reflection, the ſoul ſees and pronounces all ſuch affections to be vanity and vexation of ſpirit. It deſires to be relieved from them, and to have that peace and tranquillity within itſelf, which all the outward good of the world cannot beſtow. How this is to be attained, the Pſalmiſt intimates in the following, verſe 5. *Offer the ſacrifices of righteouſneſs; and put your truſt in the Lord.* Without recourſe to the God of all grace, the ſoul, convinced of its errors and iniquities, muſt continue diſturbed with fear. But his word declares, that there is mercy *with him that he may forgive.* He is acceſſible, and may be approached with the *ſacrifices of righteouſneſs.* What thoſe are the Pſalmiſt informs us, Pſalm li. and 17: Where he ſays, *The ſacrifices of God are a broken ſpirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God thou wilt not deſpiſe.*

Conſciouſneſs

Conſciouſneſs of iniquity and tranſgreſſion, may juſtly rend the heart with concern and grief. It is neceſſary, indeed, that the ſoul ſhould feel the wounds inflicted by ſin, and be deeply ſenſible of the evil of it, before its remiſſion can be hoped for, or obtained. Its odious nature, together with its fatal conſequences, its contrariety to God's righteouſneſs, and the aggravating circumſtances attending the commiſſion of it, come all under the review of the penitent mind, and are ſufficient cauſes of ſorrow and contrition. If, according to the grounds given for it, the ſenſe of the guilt of ſin be thus ſincere, if confeſſion of it be made unto God, with a cordial and determined purpoſe of amendment, he will graciouſly accept this *ſacrifice*, and, according to his promiſe, *ſhew mercy to the humble and truly penitent*. Their faith and truſt repoſed in his holy covenant of grace, ſhall procure for them the bleſſings of it; peace with him, and peace with their own ſouls. Let this then be taken by us for an invariable rule, that we muſt confeſs and forſake our iniquities, if we would find mercy and favour from the father of our ſpirits, and be enabled to render the praiſe that is due unto him, not only in our worſhip and devotion, but in our lives and actions.

VERSES 6. 7. and 8.—*There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaſeth. I will both lay me down in peace, and ſleep: for thou, Lord, only makeſt me dwell in ſafety.*—The import of theſe verſes, in reſpect of the propriety and truth of the ſentiments they contain, may be fully underſtood, without any large comment upon them. The Pſalmiſt having, in verſe 2. reproved the irreligious and worldly minded men, as *loving vanity, and believing a lie*, he here repreſents them again, together with others, not more wiſe or laudable than they appeared, crying out, *Who will ſhew us any good?* There was reaſon, indeed, for this exclamation, if they believed that there was no other *ſpecies* of good in the rational world

of God, but what was to be found in the gratification of their corporeal ſenſes, in the *luſt of the eye*, *the luſt of the fleſh*, *and the pride of life*. The round of theſe pleaſures, much to the ſorrow of their votaries, might be ſoon run; or ſatiety, and its ſure attendant diſguſt, enſue in the midſt of them. What then was to be done? The courſe taken by the monarch of the eaſt, who proclaimed a reward for the invention of a *new and untried pleaſure*, proved unſucceſsful. Such a rarity, although earneſtly ſought after, could not be found. *For what*, ſays Soloman, *can the man do that cometh after the king? even that only which hath been already done:* So that there is nothing new in the objects of ſenſe, or in the manner of their being rendered pleaſurable, *to be met with under the ſun.* In the repeated experience of this woeful *blank*, as it ſeems to the ungodly, How does it fare, if you aſk, ſays the Pſalmiſt, with the godly, and the truly pious and the good? I will reply for them from my experience, to which they will join the teſtimony of theirs, that there is in the moral world of God, a ſpecies of pleaſure, delight, and joy, with which no other can be compared: Not the fair dawning of the morning, after the darkneſs of the night; not the ſun coming forth in his brightneſs, to irradiate the earth, and diſcover to the eye of man a multiplicity of objects that awake and exhilirate his ſenſes; many that ſhow what a bountiful proviſion is made for his wants; the fields clad with waving corn, and the vineyards ſtored with trees of the richeſt fruit. All theſe are thy gifts, *O thou moſt adorable Creator*, and gracious preſerver of men! Yet there is, in the diſpenſations of thy grace, what every well diſpoſed mind will account far more delightful and precious. It is the light of thy countenance lifted up on the ſouls of men, a ſure token and pledge that thou will prove to them, having faith in thy word, that leads to holy obedience, a ſource and fountain, not of temporal life only, but of that which is ſpiritual and everlaſting. If, by thy favour, this be my portion, I will be glad, and have more real joy than worldly men make ſhew of, in the greateſt abundance of their earthly ſtore. It will bring peace to my mind,

mind, to which they are ſtrangers. Under the wing of thy providence I ſhall not fear the outward calamities of this life; for whether I wake or ſleep, I truſt in thee alone as my ſafeguard; and am confident of finding thy all-ſufficient protection.

LECTURE IV.

PSALM VIII.

SUCH is the nature of man, that, in his complex conſtitution, the organs of ſenſe are firſt awaked, and called forth into exerciſe. By their means ſuch knowledge of external objects is acquired, as enables him not only to diſtinguiſh them from one another, but to note up and hold in his memory the different impreſſions, whether of pleaſure or pain, he has experienced from the various kinds of them with which he has been converſant. Attention to ſelf-preſervation, and endeavours to increaſe his pleaſurable ſenſations, ſo occupy his thoughts in early years, that he extends them not beyond the bounds of theſe conſiderations. If he appears to be ſenſible to beauty in ſome objects, and deformity in others, his perception of this is not an *idea*, but a bare ſenſation, not only like to, but the ſame with, what he feels agreeable or diſagreeable, pleaſant or painful, to his external ſenſes; as in the caſe of their being differently affected with light and darkneſs. Before he comes to the conception of what is beautiful, or otherwiſe, it behoves him to conſider objects, not merely in reference to the effect they have upon his organs of ſenſe, but alſo to obſerve in what connection or correſpondence they ſtand with one another, and whether a certain order and

arrangement of them appears to take place. This act of the mind is termed *contemplation*; by which, not contented with careleſs, indifferent, and paſſing glances at the many ſtriking objects daily beheld in the natural world, it ſurveys them with cloſe attention, and finds that, inſtead of being confuſedly thrown together, parts relate to parts, and theſe harmoniouſly conſpire to form one *whole*.

The brutiſh man, who exerts no other faculties but his corporeal ones, is alone a ſtranger to this diſcovery: Yet, if his ſituation in life be ſuch as abſolves him, in a conſiderable degree, from ſolicitude about his ſafety, or much care about the gratification of his appetites, he paſſes not his ſolitary days without a *ſtupid wondering at all he ſees*, but diſcerns neither the lines of beauty or wiſdom obſervable in them. This diſcovery is appropriated to the contemplative mind; nor is deep ſtudy, or penetration, required for its attainment. The natural light of the human ſoul, although not aided as the Pſalmiſt was, by divine revelation, is ſufficient for it in a great meaſure; ſo far, at leaſt, that the creating Deity might be known and confeſſed from the work that he had made. The Pſalmiſt, who had the gift of inſpired wiſdom and knowledge ſuperadded to his natural faculties, proves in theſe ſacred ſongs, compoſed to the honour and praiſe of the Moſt High, how able and well qualified he was for this employment; and that, as his devout meditations on the natural and moral perfections of the Supreme Being brought delight and comfort to his own ſoul, ſo they afforded a copious ſtore of religious and moral inſtruction to the whole people of Iſrael. Of this the Pſalm under conſideration is a remarkable evidence, as may appear from the explication of the verſes.

VERSE 1.—*O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who haſt ſet thy glory above the heavens.*—The Pſalmiſt introduces this ſacred hymn with an animated ſtrain of adoration and praiſe to that God, who had made himſelf known to the people of Iſrael in a peculiar manner, and under the name of the *Lord Jehovah*,

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as being the God of their ſtrength; and the excellency of whoſe divine and ever bleſſed attributes it became all the nations of the earth to acknowledge and revere, more eſpecially in the contemplation of his benevolence and favour to the human ſpecies. Although, in the creation of the viſible heavens, of the earth, and of man, the glory that could ariſe to the Deity was inferior to the ſplendour of it in the inviſible and intellectual world, where, as being the place of his throne, ſpheres of angels ſhone forth in his preſence with all the luſtre of their intelligent natures, and the complete purity and rectitude of their affections; yet, in this ſublunary part of the Creator's works, his almighty power, unerring wiſdom, and unbounded goodneſs, were diſplayed in ſuch extent, that they could not, in human conception, be rendered more illuſtrious. It might indeed appear a myſtery, not to be conceived by the moſt enlightened of the angelic minds, how a ſyſtem of being, different in its nature from that which they knew and were converſant in, (if it was poſſible to be formed,) could miniſter to, or *declare the glory of the inviſible God*, in a ſuitable manner, and to a degree worthy of his infinite wiſdom and power: But what, to limited underſtandings, might ſeem an impoſſibility, in the mind of the Deity was very poſſible. Witneſſes of this new creation, they, with aſtoniſhment, beheld a material ſubſtance produced out of nothing, by *the word* only of his almighty power. He ſaid, *let there be light; and there was light.* Each days work of the creation, as recorded in Scripture, brought forward to their view a new object of admiration, and with it a freſh theme for their admiration and praiſe. For, *when God looked upon his work, and ſaw that in every part it was good, the morning ſtars ſinging in harmony together, all the angels, thoſe heavenly ſons of God, are ſaid to have ſhouted for joy.* Job, xxxviii. 7.

For the finiſhing of his ſublunary works, and to connect their ſyſtem, in ſome meaſure, with that of the angelic beings, *God made man after his own image*; a creature far ſurpaſſing all the tribes of animated

mated ones produced upon the face of the earth; and, in reſpect of the excellency of his rational faculties, and with the characters of *wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and true holineſs*, ſtamped upon his ſoul, he could be pronounced to have a conſtitution ſo dignified, as to be *but a little lower than that of the angels in heaven*. In it there was a combination of the two diſtinct ſubſtances, *body* and *ſoul*, or *mind*; and that ſo wiſely and happily perfected, that, in the one, the faireſt form of the corporeal nature was beheld, and, in the other, the qualities of the ſpiritual nature ſhone as *a crown of glory and honour ſet upon his head. Wonderfully made*, as he might appear to himſelf and to angelic beings, his deſtination to *glorify God with his body and ſpirit* was manifeſt. His mental powers enabled him to know this to be the chief end of his creation, and the moral diſpoſitions of his ſoul prompted him to conform all his purpoſes and actions to it. It was to the greater honour of God, and alſo to that of the rational nature given him, that this conformity was not to be conſtrained, but voluntary, and the act of his free will. Whether, in exerciſing it, he might more affect the knowledge of angels, than the ſanctity of their affections, was a point left to his choice. Whether he might aſpire to be wiſer and more intelligent than his Creator had made him, was a trial of his piety, and ſubmiſſion to the divine will, moſt proper to be taken. It became him, as it did every creature in the rational world of God, to believe that the faculties of mind aſſigned to him were the moſt ſuitable, and the beſt, in that ſphere of being he was appointed to occupy. Any ſuggeſtion contradictory to this principle, came it from one in the form of *an angel of light*, was not to be liſtened to, but abhorred. The ſin of it was puniſhed by the expulſion of the grand apoſtate angel, and his adherents, from heaven. What had excited a partial revolt among the inhabitants of the celeſtial regions, the *wicked one* conceived might prove a ſucceſsful temptation to man, placed in an *earthly Paradiſe*; which, although a happy and honourable ſtation, was inferior to that in the heavenly abode. *If ye eat of the tree in the midſt of the garden*, forbidden to you as

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it is, ſaid the tempter to our firſt parents, *you ſhall not ſurely die; for God doth know that then your eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as Gods knowing good and evil.* They were taken in the ſnare laid for them, from their deſire of becoming angels in wiſdom and knowledge. They riſked the breach of a poſitive command, enjoined them, by God, under the penalty of death. By their act of diſobedience, they were ſubjected to mortality; and, as they found that the commiſſion of ſin operated gradually to the prejudice and ruin of their bodily frame, ſo they proved its effects, upon their ſouls, to be no leſs pernicious and diſmal. *The gold of their conſtitution*, as the Scripture metaphorically expreſſes it, *became dim, and its fine gold was changed.*

Unleſs the all-wiſe and merciful Deity had provided a remedy for this diſordered condition of human nature, by his holy covenant of grace, with a *Redeemer*, the poſterity of Adam muſt have been thruſt out from all communion with Heaven, and obtained no more mercy than the rebellious angels did, who were caſt into *utter darkneſs* and miſery. But, by the ſubſtitution of the *Redeemer*, as a ſecond Adam, who, coming in the human nature, was, by his active and paſſive obedience, to atone for the offence of the *firſt*, mankind were not only delivered from condemnation, but brought into the capacity of attaining all the bleſſed privileges of the regenerated children of God. Their ſecurity for being thus recovered into a ſtate of ſalvation, next to the word of the God of truth plighted for it, was, that perfection in the performance of all religious and moral duties they owed to God and one another was not required; nor were they called to ſtand forth and rely upon their own ſtrength for rendering that meaſure of obedience to the divine commandments which was competent to, and might be juſtly exacted of, them in the circumſtances wherein they were placed. Reduced as men were by their fall to the condition of children, helpleſs in themſelves, and incapable of ſubſiſting but under the proviſions made for their preſervation; yet, out of ſuch infirmity of human

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nature, the God of all power, ſays the Pſalmiſt, verſe 2. *has ordained ſtrength to ariſe*, or, as it is expreſſed, in the application of this text, by our Saviour in the New Teſtament, Mathew, xxi. and 16. *praiſe to be perfected*; to the glory of his wiſdom and his grace. This was done to the greater illuſtration of both, *becauſe of his enemies*; that thoſe impious men, who took upon them to arraign the wiſdom or moral rectitude of his counſels, reſpecting the human race, might be confuted; when the evil of man's apoſtacy was ſeen to be turned into good; and the meaneſt and weakeſt of that generation of beings, whom *the enemy of all good* believed he had trodden under his feet, ſhould be proved to miniſter to the honour of their Maker in ſo ſignal a manner, that their adverſary, although boaſtful, and purſuing them with unrelenting hatred, inſtead of being able to prevail againſt them, either by force or fraud, would be made ſenſible to what little account all his machinations would turn, and that if he continued them, it could be only like the feeble effort of a ſerpent to ſting, that has received, upon his head, a ſtunning and deadly blow.

It is alledged by ſome interpreters, who would alter the Hebrew word *Gittith*, found in the title of this Pſalm, into *Gittite*, that David having compoſed it, ſoon after his victory over *Goliah* the *Gittite*, alludes to that event in the expreſſions, *Out of the mouth of babes and ſucklings haſt thou ordained ſtrength, becauſe of thine enemies; that thou mighteſt ſtill the enemy and the avenger.* The conjecture is ſpecious, and might be admitted as juſt, if the word *Gittith* did not occur in the titles of ſome other Pſalms, where the change of it to *Gittite* would be altogether arbitrary and improper. But notwithſtanding this objection to the ſuppoſed alluſion, the combat of David, then a ſtripling, and too weak to bear upon him the weighty armour of the men of war, with Goliah, a giant in ſtature and in ſtrength, who inſulted the whole hoſt of Iſrael, and met with a ſignal overthrow, might well give occaſion to the Pſalmiſt's alluding to it in ſuch figurative terms as are here uſed by him, when celebrating,

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in a hymn of praiſe, the excellent name of the God of Iſrael, whoſe almighty protection, and ſpecial favour to that people, could not be more palpably demonſtrated *before the eyes of the heathen nations*, than in inſtances given of *weak inſtruments* being made *marvelouſly ſtrong, and perſons rendered valiant in fight, who turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

The figurative expreſſions will alſo bear the highly moral and important explication that has been given them, when conſidered as holding forth that intereſting doctrine delivered in the Scriptural Revelation, that mankind were no longer to look upon themſelves as ſtanding in the capacity, or on the footing which Adam did before his apoſtacy, when the ray of divine wiſdom enlightened his ſoul in the knowledge of all religious and moral duties; and, along with his failure in obedience to what he knew to be the will of God, a cloud had darkened his underſtanding, and overſpread the minds of his poſterity. Children they were all become *in true wiſdom*, which only could be imparted to them *from above.* The word of it was ſupernaturally given at firſt by the miniſtry of angels and inſpired prophets; and then a volume of it written in the Moſaic Law, for the inſtruction of Iſrael. In no other way, but in ſome one or other of thoſe modes of revelation, as they might be appointed by God, were men of any tribe or nation to attain, or hope to attain, the wiſdom neceſſary for their ſpiritual welfare. The word of the living God, the Father of their ſpirits, was alone to be accounted *ſufficient to inſtruct them in all things pertaining to this life, and that which is to come. With the ſimplicity of new born babes, it became them to deſire* and to receive this word, which would be found to have the ſavour, and be the earneſt of immortal life to their ſouls Inſtead of ſeeking after wiſdom not adapted to their ſphere of being, or capacity, as their miſled progenitors did, they were to know wherein conſiſted the firſt and moſt eſſential principle of it, and which was declared to be ſo from the beginning: For to man, it was ſaid, either immediately after his creation, or, as tradition reported, upon his

expulſion from paradiſe, and for a rebuke of his tranſgreſſion, *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil, is underſtanding.* Job 28. and 29.

VERSES 3. and 4.—*When I conſider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the ſtars which thou haſt ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him?*—It has been obſerved, that man, by his mental faculties of reflection and reaſon, is qualified for *contemplation;* that act of his rational ſoul, which proves him to be in a rank of *being* ſuperior to that of all the other creatures of God in this lower world. The outward and corporeal ſenſes with which he is provided, in common with them, are ſo far from forming the boundary of his capacity, for the knowledge of objects preſented to him, that they appear to be given him only to rouſe his attention, and excite his reflection and judgment about their diverſified forms and qualities. The earth, the ſea, the ſkies, at once diſplayed before him, ſeem, in a ſuperficial view, to be three diſtinct ſubſtances; but attention to their properties, ſoon convinces him that they are in their eſſences no more than one, and of the ſame corporeal nature. In their ſeveral forms, motions, arrangements, and their relations to one another, although order, convenience, and utility are ſtrikingly conſpicuous, yet they give not the leaſt ſign of having *wiſdom* or mind in themſelves. Ignorant and unconſcious of their movements, and of all that is done by them, they appear to have no more underſtanding than the hand of man hath that it writes, or his feet, that they walk, or for what purpoſe theſe and other ſuch motions are performed by them.

Their places and ſtations, regular and orderly as theſe are, they ſurely have not choſen nor held counſel about their poſitions, any more than the various members of the human body, when yet in embryo and imperfect in their forms, can be ſuppoſed to have conſulted together, and determined how they could be beſt combined, and act in concert, and to moſt advantage, their ſeveral parts. So any line of wiſdom, or law or order, in their conſtitution, not only of

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the corporeal and inanimate parts of the world muſt be confeſſed to be utterly inſenſible, but the ſame thing is to be affirmed, (with the exception of man,) of the whole animal creation; whether they be *the beaſts of the fields, the fowls of the air, the fiſh of the ſea, or whatſoever paſſeth through the path of the deep.* To the human kind alone, it is given to recogniſe and trace thoſe ſignatures of amazing deſign and contrivance, that are to be obſerved in the general frame of the world, and in the compoſition of its particular parts. This knowledge is *the crown of glory ſet upon man's head*, and the more he exerciſes it, the ſuper-eminent Dignity of his intelligent nature is the more declared. It inſpires the ſentiment of adoration and praiſe to the giver of it; while the whole tribes of irrational creatures, appearing as moſt of them do, to rejoice in their being and life, are either mutes altogether, or having voice and ſounds only, expreſs, in a certain manner, what they feel of pleaſure or pain. Man is capable of rendering thanks, in mind and in ſpeech, to the *author of all good, to that God, who, by his wiſdom, made the heavens, and ſtretched the earth above the waters; who made the great lights of the heavens, the ſun to rule by day, and the moon and ſtars by night. Theſe are thy works, ſays the Pſalmiſt, Father omnipotent, which thou haſt made of old; and they abide this day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy ſervants. How manifold are thy works, O Lord! in wiſdom haſt thou made them all. Day unto day uttereth ſpeech of them; and night unto night ſheweth knowledge.* It is not only when the ſun mounts into the heights of heaven, and diffuſes the ſplendor of his rays over earth, ſea, and ſkies, that the multiplicity of thy wonderful works are to be ſeen; when night draws her ſable curtain over the face of the ſublunary world, the *moon and ſtars ſhine out:* There is ſtilneſs and ſilence every where; all the animated creation is rocked into reſt: They ſink into deep ſleep, or grateful repoſe, after their activity and labour through the day: Inſenſible as they are, then, of their condition, and having committed themſelves to ſleep, that may be that of death; Whence does their

ſecurity come, and who watches over them? It is in thy providential care that their ſafety lies, and in thee, who knoweſt not to ſlumber or to ſleep, that their protection is found; that vigilance and care being extended to them, which a tender parent exerciſes over his offſpring, eſpecially in thoſe moments when they can take no thought, or pay the leaſt attention to what paſſes around them.

Does this heavenly and gracious Parent deign to watch over the children of men, in the hours of their ſlumbers; and ought not ſuch condeſcending grace to be acknowledged? By all who have the ſenſe or ſentiments becoming rational creatures, it will. *As it is a good thing, and pleaſant to give thanks unto the God of all mercies, and his praiſe is comely; I will ſhew forth his loving kindneſs in the day time, and his faithfulneſs every night: I will prevent the night watches that I may meditate upon his word, or, at midnight, I will riſe to render praiſe unto him;* for, however different the ſhade of the one may be from the luſtre of the other, they are ſo adjuſted in the natural world, that both the beauty of its ſyſtem, and the accommodation of its component parts, to the benefit of all the creatures that live in it, are more eminently diſplayed. Yet how varied is the night ſcene from that of the day? The canopy of the heavens is changed; the ſun is gone down, and with him all his majeſtic and diffuſive radiance. In his place comes the moon, with her reflected and ſober light; but having the accompaniment of an immenſe number of ſtars, diſſeminated over the whole *arch* of the ſkies, which no human eye can count, or the mind of man, in calculation, *reckon how many there be.* Thou Almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth, and *whoſe handywork* every ordinance in them both is demonſtrated to be; *Thou only knoweſt and can tell the number of theſe luminaries, written up as they are in the record of their creation, and thou calleſt them all by names*, which denote their appointed order and ſtations. As, beſides other great ends of their creation, they were given for *ſigns, and marks of days*, and months, and years, and alſo of *ſeaſons*, or variations of heat and cold, dryneſs and moiſture, which take

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place in the atmoſphere, and upon the globe of the earth; the *conſtellations of them* have been early obſerved, and ſuch names applied to them as the languages of men could afford, to expreſs what they had diſcovered, or could underſtand concerning their poſitions in the heavens, and their ſettled courſes, together with the different influences ſuppoſed to be derived from them to this ſublunary world. Hence Job, after repreſenting the Deity in the act of ſpreading out the heavens, ſayeth, that he *maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the Chambers of the South*; names that are plainly *Grecian*, and made uſe of in the Septuagint Tranſlation, as the propereſt to expound the Hebrew Epithets, denoting the four quarters or ſeaſons of the year, in which the four *conſtellations* mentioned were obſerved to have their courſes, and, as it were, to preſide. Job, 9th chap. and 9th verſe. They are again taken notice of more particularly in chap. 29th and 31ſt, where the Divine Being intimates how incompetent all human power, or any energy inferior to his own, would prove to order their coming forth, or to regulate their motions. *Canſt thou bind the ſweet influences of Pleiades, or looſe the bands of Orion? Canſt thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his ſeaſon; or canſt thou guide Arcturus with his ſons? Knoweſt thou the ordinances of heaven? Canſt thou ſet the dominion thereof upon the earth?*

The *Pleiades* are the ſeven ſtars that have their *aſcendancy* in the beginning of the ſpring, as it enſues in moſt of the countries in the northern *Hemiſpheres*, and were ſo denominated in the language of the *Greeks*, from the genial warmth that takes place at that ſeaſon, which relaxes the rigours of winter, and opens the ſea and great rivers for navigation, and the land for culture. By what power or contrivance of any human being can the appearance of this company of ſtars be either forwarded or retarded? Men may wiſh to bind up and prolong their *ſweet influences* upon the earth; but all in vain. Their prayers and invocations are no more effectual for any ſuch purpoſe, (unleſs by the will of the Deity) than the ſhort reach and pitiful ſtrength of their arms. In like manner, it is aſked

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of man, *Canſt thou looſe the bands of Orion*, the leading ſtar of that conſtellation, which, having its aſcendant in the beginning of winter, may be reckoned to involve the ſkies in turbulence, and bind the air and the earth in rigid bands of ſevere cold and froſt? The removal, or ſlackening of theſe are not, in the leaſt, at thy command. Look again towards the north, and behold Arcturus, the pole-ſtar of that *wain-like* conſtellation. He uniformly keeps his courſe in the heavens, and his attendant ſtars, as if they were his *ſons*, deviate not from it. But who bringeth thee forth, which art called in the Hebrew language *Mazzaroth?* How comeſt thou only at a certain ſeaſon within our view? Who, but that ſame God, who having arranged the conſtellations in the northern ſkies, hath alſo furniſhed the *Chambers of the South* with their like? They may have, indeed, that peculiar appellation which implies their being ſeparated from our horizon, and on account of their diſtance, few of them being viſible to us, or the nations that dwell within the circles of northern latitude. Since the ſtars that do appear to us cannot be diſtinctly counted, ſome of them, as in the Galaxy, being crowded together, and abſorbed, as it were, in their reciprocated light, Who can tell or gueſs the number of thoſe which are altogether withdrawn from our ſight or obſervation? They muſt therefore be, as the Scripture has pronounced them, innumerable to the children of men, coming forward in their ſucceſſive generations to behold, but not comprehend the extent of theſe celeſtial and unſearchable *works of the fingers of God.*

If I here have aſcribed to the king of Iſrael all the knowledge that Job had in the ſcience of aſtronomy, I certainly do not exaggerate, but rather detract from the improvements it received in the Pſalmiſt's time. It is a point agreed upon by the learned, that in the country of Chaldea, from whence the fathers of Iſrael came, the earlieſt attention was paid to, and particular obſervations were made about, the motions of the *celeſtial* bodies. Abram was a native of Urr, a city of the *Chaldeans*, as Job is recorded to have been of the land of Uz, a territorial diſtrict adjacent to Chaldea. I pretend not

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to ſay to what Abram's aſtronomical knowledge, or that of Jacob and his ſons, amounted, when the latter went down into Egypt. I only obſerve, that theſe patriarchs could not have been removed to any other country, except, perhaps, to Babylon, where the ſtudies of *geometry* and aſtronomy were ſo much cultivated. That the *heads* of the tribes of *Iſrael*, while Joſeph was entruſted with the civil adminiſtration of the Egyptian empire, and before they came to be envied and oppreſſed, would profit by circumſtances ſo favourable to their inſtruction in the ſciences mentioned, and others wherein the Egyptians excelled, we cannot entertain a doubt. At length, *Moſes*, deſtined by the God of Iſrael for far higher purpoſes than being diſtinguiſhed by ſuperior knowledge in the human and ſecular ſciences, was raiſed up, Educated as a ſon of Pharaoh's daughter, he became completely *ſkilled in all the learning* and acquired knowledge of the Egyptian Magi or philoſophers. The Chaldean *wiſe* men, it is known, meaſured the months of the year by obſerving the conſtant courſes held by the ſun through the *conſtellations* in the heavens of a certain extent, within which that luminary performed all his circles around the earth. His ſtages, thus marked out, amounted to twelve in number, and the compleating of them founded that computation of time, called the *Solar Year*, conſiſting of twelve months. This mode of reckoning the periods of time, derived as it was from their anceſtors, the *Iſraelites* followed during their continuance in Egypt, and probably learned to be more preciſe and correct in it. But immediately, or ſoon after their departure, it was changed by Moſes, for a computation of the months of the year, chiefly by the courſes of the moon; for they retained ſtill, for the dates of ſome ſecular appointments, a reckoning by the beginning and end of the ſolar year.

What I would infer from this particular explication of the knowledge the Jewiſh nation had in aſtronomy, is, that David conſidered the places and apparent motions of the celeſtial bodies as an object moſt worthy of his attention and ſtudy; and that being accuſtomed

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to it from his youth, when he watched his father's flocks by night, he ſtill delighted in, and improved his mind by the contemplation of the heavens. It appears, eſpecially from this Pſalm, and the 19th, the 77th, the 89th, the 104th, and paſſages in ſeveral others, that the Pſalmiſt's obſervation of the luminaries of heaven, and of the various meteors of light that pervade the ſkies, was not ſuperficial, but equal to the moſt ſcientific knowledge of them attained to in his days; and the cultivation of which was the more neceſſary and urged from its connection with the inſtitutions of religion, that required an exact reckoning and punctual obſervance of the many ſolemn days, weeks, and months, as preſcribed under the Moſaic diſpenſation. It is even obſervable, that where the Pſalmiſt touches but occaſionally the ſubject of natural things, whether of the heaven's or of the earth, he uſes not the turgid and unmeaning ſtyle of the *rhapſodiſt*, but that of one who knew well how to expreſs his thoughts with propriety and diſtinctneſs upon theſe *topics*; and although the Eaſtern Poetry allowed him much latitude in that reſpect, he choſe not to adopt it more than became the intelligent and inſtructive, the ſacred and divinely inſpired bard of the ſanctuary of Zion.

Other ſtudies there are, beſides thoſe of the natural works of God, which prove an exerciſe to the rational faculties of *man*, and, being proſecuted by him, diſplay his ingenuity. Some of them, however, have more a tendency to flatter and cheriſh his vanity, than properly improve his underſtanding. His faculty of reaſoning, becauſe it enables him to diſtinguiſh, in ſome general propoſitions, what is true from what is falſe, he conſiders as ſufficient to carry him on in a chain of abſtract diſcuſſions, to the knowledge of all things that *are*, or can *be*. The ſlighteſt ſurvey of the viſible works of God is enough to reprobate this preſumption in man; to whom even, in the moſt exalted condition of his mind, it was given to read but imperfectly and partially, the lines of wiſdom apparent in them; and that, running on from one end of the earth to the other, have not their termination there, but are ſtretched over the *immenſe* ſpaces of the heavens.

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As the variety and extent of the Divine works, as expoſed to the eye of man, are incomprehenſible, and objects of wonder and admiration to all rational minds, ſo the inviſible agency, which pervades the whole and every part of them, is no leſs amazing, and demonſtrated to be immeaſurably great. In the ſeveral ſyſtems of being, inanimate or having life, intelligent or deſtitute of reaſon, of the human or the angelic conſtitution, it acts with equal and unremitting power and efficacy, and in a manner accommodated to their varying natures, for the ſupport and preſervation of them all; in that order too, and upon that plan, which the infinite wiſdom, and boundleſs goodneſs of their Creator, has ordained for every one of them. There is none of the numberleſs ſpecies of beings, from the higheſt to the loweſt of them, which God has made, that appears to be forgotten by him, or an outcaſt from his providential care: He accounts no work of his hands unworthy of his regard, unleſs there be, in the intelligent part of them, a creature found, who, endowed with knowledge of his duty, and having faculties adapted to the performance of it, has abuſed his liberty of acting, and *choſen to do evil rather than good.* Such, alas! hath man and his generation become; and yet, *O God, Thou art mindful of him; ſo graciouſly mindful, as to demonſtrate that thy tender mercies are over all thy other wonderful works.* If man had not been made, would there have been a deficiency in the works of God? or if, to his all diſcerning eye, it might ſo appear, what other obſerving one, among the angels of Heaven, could have found it out? Even now, although he holds a place and rank in the creation, and which ſeems proper and requiſite in this ſublunary ſyſtem; yet, in the contemplation of the immenſity of the Heavens, and their bright furniture, the view of his ſphere of being appears to be loſt, and his importance of ſo little account, that the natural ſuggeſtion of the human mind is, *Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him?*

Notwithſtanding that he is a tranſgreſſor in that degree, as to deſerve being blotted out of the book of life, and of thy remembrance,

yet, unworthy as he is, thy mercy, O God of all grace, is extended to him. The interpoſition of thy holy covenant, with a Redeemer, in his behalf, is manifeſt, and effectively declared by the ſtation he ſtill occupies in this lower world. Although he is become incapable of filling it with the dignity and ability of his primæval and uncorrupted nature, or in a manner that is ſuitable, and required of him, he ſtill holds it in outward appearance; and as if he had made no forfeiture of the prerogative aſſigned him at firſt by God, *to have dominion over the works of his hands*, the whole of the animal creation are ſubjected to him, and may be ſaid to be *put under his feet*; ſo great is his control over them all, whether they be of the tamer kind, that yield themſelves eaſily to him, or that wildly range the fields, or wing aloft their way in the air, or ſwim ſecure in the watery elements; ſome of them he takes to aſſiſt him in the culture of the earth; from ſome he clothes himſelf; and many of them are uſed as proviſion for his table. What abundant reaſon, then, have men to ſay unto God, *How precious to us-ward are thy thoughts, and how great the ſum of them! O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

Improvement of the Subject.

Is the name and nature of the Moſt High ſo excellent in the earth? then let us learn to undervalue the ſuppoſed excellencies of any of the creatures in compariſon with it. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? ſaid the Pſalmiſt; and there is none in earth to be deſired beſides thee. How many of our thoughts and cares are employed about thoſe things which cannot profit us in the day of evil? Senſible we ought to be of our often forſaking the fountain of all good, and hewing out unto ourſelves broken and empty ciſterns that can hold no water. Let us correct this vice of our mind, and learn to place our happineſs, not on the empty and periſhing pleaſures of the world, but in holding ſpiritual intercourſe with the Father of our immortal

immortal ſouls. The contemplation of his excellencies will afford a conſtant ſubject of delight to our minds. If we acquaint ourſelves with them, we ſhall find internal peace. The troubles we meet with in the world will in vain oppoſe our reſt in him, whoſe loving kindneſs is better than life: Lower enjoyments will not carry us aſide; but the light of his countenance, lifted upon our minds, will prove the higheſt joy. 2*dly*, If God has rendered his name excellent in all the earth, how juſtly may we expect to find it exalted and magnified in Heaven. *Here* we ſee only in part the diſplay of his ever bleſſed perfections; but *there*, they ſhall ſhine out to us in a more perfect manner. Let us often look forward to this ſplendor and glory of the Divine Majeſty, that will hereafter be revealed. If this material and corruptible earth ſpeaks forth his praiſe, how much more ſhall the ever durable manſions of Heaven proclaim it aloud? The innumerable company of angels that ſurround the throne of the eternal Deity, find, in that intellectual world, ſubjects for their exalted and continual ſongs of adoration and praiſe, to him who reigns and rules for evermore, to the glory of his perfect righteouſneſs, unerring wiſdom, and unchangeable truth; and, joined with theſe, to that of his boundleſs goodneſs and benignity to all the creatures he hath made. 3*dly*, We may underſtand what a noble and excellent ſtudy religion and true piety hold forth, and of what ineſtimable advantage and comfort to us divine revelation muſt prove, by which we become inſtructed, much beyond, and with far more certainty than what our natural reaſon ever can dictate, in the knowledge of the attributes of the Deity. To have proper conceptions of him, and to know him, as revealed in his word, brings forward to our view the enjoyment of everlaſting life, by his ſpecial grace, to the pious, the humble, and the devout, among the children of men. Hence, holy, pure, and becoming affections toward him, are inſpired, Acquainted with the great end of our being here, we meditate on his precepts with delight, and deſire to walk in the light of them through

this tranſitory world; that approved as faithful and obedient ſervants, we may be joined to the ſociety of the bleſſed above, to be for ever with the Lord.

LECTURE V.

PSALM XV.

THE *analogy* which the religious and moral ſentiments, held forth in this pſalm, bear to thoſe of the firſt, and the yet nearer reſemblance they have to the devout ſtrains of the 24th, is obvious and remarkable. The *three* have ſuch ſimilarity, and are ſo clearly marked as parallels to each other, that they may well be pronounced, upon the ſlighteſt inſpection, to have been compoſed by the ſame divinely inſpired author, who underſtood well how to give, in a maſterly and ingenious manner, ſome new touches to each of the *ſpecimens* he preſented of the ſame ſacred and highly intereſting theme.

It is the character of the man of true religion, piety, and virtue, which, as a ſubject moſt worthy of his meditation, the Pſalmiſt choſe to deſcribe and celebrate, in the three encomiaſtic ſongs that have ſuch remarkable affinity. In a ſeparate view, each of them appears to be a finiſhed piece in itſelf, until we come to the peruſal of the others; and then we perceive with what propriety and advantage the ſame admired portrait may admit of ſeveral diverſified, and yet correſponding lines, by which, taken together, it is diſplayed in a ſtronger and more ſtriking light. But, without attempting any unneceſſary and refined illuſtration of this critical point, I ſhall only obſerve,

ſerve, in general, that this 15th pſalm, when compared with the other two, is diſtinguiſhed from them by the ſimplicity of its compoſition; and that although it be introduced in almoſt the ſame words with thoſe uſed in the 24th, and propoſes the ſame important queſtion concerning the characteriſtical properties of a true citizen of *Zion*, it riſes to no elevation of ſtyle, but delivers in plain, yet very expreſſive language, an anſwer to the ſtated queſtion. In the deliniation of the character, there is a particularity and minuteneſs, which runs out into ſeveral verſes; while, in the other, it is finiſhed in one ſentence. The one appears evidently to have been compoſed for the public ſervice of the tabernacle, and preparatory to that of the temple, when the aſſembled tribes of Iſrael made a ſolemn proceſſion to the *holy hill of Zion;* in the courſe of which, ſtops of their movements were appointed, and a regulated diviſion of ſentences, in the form of queſtions by the prieſts, and anſwers by the people, alternately took place. This ſet form of the ſanctuary ſervice, eſpecially in high and ſolemn feſtivals, is exhibited in the compoſure of the 24th pſalm, from the beginning to the end; but in the one we have read, there is only an alluſion to it, which proves it to be a ſketch of what the Pſalmiſt meant to indite more at large, when his ſacred ſong was to be given as a model and illuſtration of the order and harmony of the public devotion. In the mean time, it might ſerve as a memorial to himſelf, and to every one of the congregation of Iſrael, what ſort of perſon *he* ought to be, who not only attended the outward duties of the tabernacle, but, from the diſpoſitions of his ſoul and mind, would be regarded, in the eye of God, as one entitled to receive both the temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings and benefits of his holy ſanctuary. But I come to conſider and explain the verſes as they ſtand in order.

VERSE 1.—*Lord, who ſhall abide in thy tabernacle? who ſhall dwell in thy holy hill?*—When the twelve tribes of Iſrael were declared to be that people whom God, by a peculiar covenant with their fathers, had choſen, out of all the families of the earth, to be his worſhippers

worſhippers and ſervants, and to have the honour and privilege of his *ſanctuary* being eſtabliſhed among them, it might be too readily imagined by the ignorant, the inconſiderate, or the preſumptuous, that the outward acts of religion performed by them, would be accepted of God as an atonement or acquittance for the neglect or careleſs diſcharge of the moral duties of his holy law. Againſt any ſuch unhallowed and groſs miſconſtruction of the privileges of the divine ſanctuary, the Pſalmiſt here pronounces a proper and ſolemn *caveat*. The rebuke and condemnation of this impious ſuggeſtion, he intimates, might be ſufficiently apparent to every one who had the leaſt knowledge or conception of the moral perfections of the Deity adored in Iſrael, in whom eſſential *ſanctity*, and untainted righteouſneſs, was ever to be found; and therefore, as a firſt inſtruction, in the contemplation of his attributes, it was announced to all his worſhippers, *Be ye holy, for I am holy;* and that holineſs *became his tabernacle, or the houſe and place where he manifeſted himſelf, for ever*. Thoſe who entered its courts, and appeared in his more immediate preſence, were to conſider themſelves as ſtanding upon holy ground. The conſciences of the profane, the ungodly, and hypocritical, may juſtly ſmite them, when they think they may mix with the *congregation of the righteous*, and abide there, without dread of incurring evident marks of his indignation, who hath ſaid, *Sinners ſhall not ſtand*, with approbation or ſafety, *in his ſight*, or evil doers have place in the habitation of the godly and upright. Even every true and faithful worſhipper of the Deity, *when he bears in mind his holineſs*, and what a meaſure of it is required, and ſuitable to thoſe who approach unto him, will come to a *pauſe* before he advances, and put the intereſting queſtion to his own heart, Am I worthy to draw near? Can I be ranked in the number of the real citizens of Zion, when God ſhall *count them every one*, and mark in his book of remembrance, *This man and that is worthy to tread his courts*, and to obtain the ſpiritual benefits and comforts afforded to the faithful in a temporary life, as earneſts of

thoſe

thoſe they ſhall enjoy, when called to that which is everlaſting, in the Zion that is above, *in the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Moſt High*, whoſe builder and maker he is, for a habitation that cannot be removed, to angels, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect in his preſence for evermore?

VERSE 2.—*He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh the truth in his heart.*—In theſe words, the Pſalmiſt gives the firſt opening to that character, for the acquiſition of which he believed it became him, and all who drew near the tabernacle of God, to employ their moſt ſerious ſtudy and utmoſt endeavours. The ſeveral ſtrokes he lends to it, are evidently thoſe of an intelligent and able moraliſt. They are ſuch as throw light upon all the points of his intereſting ſubject. To the true citizen of Zion, or an accepted indweller there, is aſcribed a mind enlightened, not by human wiſdom only, but by that which is from above and divine. Hence he is ſaid *to walk uprightly*; that is, as one who knew that God, the Ruler and Governor of his rational creatures, had communicated to Iſrael, in his *holy law*, a copy of his moral perfections, by which all men might be inſtructed in the knowledge of what was *required* of them. By conformity to it alone, they could be judged to have rectitude in their ſentiments, and uprightneſs in their behaviour. Therefore, every true ſervant of God ſays, with the Pſalmiſt, *I have choſen the perfect way of thy commandments: They are a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.* The religious and moral principles of duty, derived from the pure ſource of the divine law, remain not dormant in the human mind, but render the convert to them *a worker of righteouſneſs*. By them, the active powers of the ſoul are called forth, and the impulſe to carry into act, and perform whatever the mind hath approved as excellent and worthy of its purſuits, becomes predominant and ſtrong. In vain do the ſenſual appetites, or wordly paſſions, ſtrive to turn its exertions a different way. The works of righteouſneſs are its great aim; *and upon the doing of them its love is ſet,*

ſet, with conſtancy and perſeverance. Conſcious as the godly man is of his natural weakneſs and inability to perform all the duties he owes to his Creator, or to man, or any of them, in a perfect manner; yet, it is the encouragement and comfort of his heart to know, that his *labours*, in the ways of righteouſneſs, *ſhall not be in vain*, or ineffectual, in conſequence of the promiſed grace and ſtrength of the Lord. The Pſalmiſt's prayer, put up in this faith and hope, expreſſed in theſe words, *The thoughts of our hearts, and the works of our hands, eſtabliſh thou, O Lord, who art our Rock and Redeemer*, appears to correſpond to that confidential one uttered by the evangelical apoſtle Paul, when he ſays, in his epiſtle to the Philippians, that *his hope and truſt was, that he who had begun a good work in them, would perform it, until the day of Jeſus Chriſt.* Chap. i. 6. To the character deſcribed, it is added, in the laſt clauſe of this verſe, that *the godly man ſpeaketh the truth in his heart*; an emphatic manner of expreſſing his being poſſeſſed of the fundamental grace of *ſincerity:* without which he knows that no act of religious or moral duty can be in the leaſt acceptable in the eye of the Deity, who looks *for truth and integrity of heart*, from all who profeſs to worſhip or ſerve him. Therefore, no falſe ſhow of any thing, in ſpeech or behaviour, that conſiſts not with the real feelings of the ſoul, is ever affected or thought of by the true ſervant of God; who is ſenſible, that even the civil offices to be rendered unto men, although they may be beneficial to them, loſe all or moſt of their ſavour and value, unleſs they proceed from an inward principle of duty, and a ſincere deſire of doing them good. In the man who, in the Pſalmiſt's phraſeology, *ſpeaketh the truth in his heart*, there is to be found an entire and conſtant conformity of the ſentiments and affections of his mind, with the words he utters, and the outward actions he performs. Hence the Pſalmiſt, when he refers the judgment of his behaviour to God, as the ſearcher of hearts, places his hope of acquittance and approbation, not on the perfection of his ſervice (for what man liveth in this life, to whom iniquity cannot be imputed, in his pure ſight), but upon the account

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of the ſincere diſpoſition of his heart and will, to think, to ſpeak, and to act, for the honour and glory of the God of truth, whom he ſerved, and who varies not from veracity, no more than from his unchangeable nature, in all his declarations and promiſes. He pleads, therefore, his ſincerity, and deſires to be judged of God, according to his knowledge of it; and that, not having *ſat with vain perſons, or gone about any ſacred duty with diſſemblers*, he might, in this reſpect, be accounted innocent, and have the aſſurance *to preſent himſelf in the tabernacle of God, and encompaſs his holy altar.* Pſal. xxvi. 4. & 5.

In other ſpiritual graces, there may always be noted ſomething awanting to their due exerciſe, or that our eſtimate of them exceeds their real worth; but if perfection can be reckoned attainable in any of them, it will be recognized in *ſincerity of heart.* With reſpect to being poſſeſſed of it or not, no ſervant of God, who examines himſelf, can be miſtaken; and as it is the qualification eſſential to the proper diſcharge of every religious or moral duty, it hardly admits of any degrees, and muſt be found *pure and entire* in itſelf, without obliquity, or not at all. Hence the people of God, in every age of his church, however ſenſible of the weakneſs and deficiencies of their beſt ſervices, have, with the Pſalmiſt, taken credit and comfort to themſelves, from a conſciouſneſs of their untainted ſincerity. Therefore, ſays the apoſtle, 2d Epiſtle to the Corinthians, i. 12. *Our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world.* We may then conclude, that the trait of the character here aſſigned to the abider in the tabernacle of Zion, correſponds to that emphatic one given by our Saviour to Nathaniel, declared to *be an Iſraelite indeed, in whom there was no guile.*

VERSE 3.—*He who back-biteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbour.*—*Next to ſpeaking the truth in his heart*, the Pſalmiſt here notes it as a quality of the godly man, that he is not inclined to defame others, or

detract from their reputation in the world. Between these two qualifications, there is an evident connection; and they will be generally found united in the same person. *He* who never utters but what he thinks, can hardly be a back-biter. Besides that his good and charitable heart disposes him to think not evil but good of all those with whom he is conversant, his integrity and candour will lead and direct *him*, if he observes what is blame-worthy in his neighbour or friend, to speak of it freely, but in private, and *with the spirit of meekness* unto himself. To proclaim, or even to whisper it to others, he looks upon as an unadequate and injurious procedure. His well-meant and faithful admonition, he is sensible, would in this way be perverted, and that what he had spoken with regret, and out of real concern for the good of another, would be soon swelled by the licentious tongues of the secret or open slanderers into a mass of calumny, enough to blot and darken his whole character. *To do no evil* in this shape to any one, a benevolent and conscientious man takes care; and if, by any thing inadvertently said or done by him, it should so happen, he would reproach himself for it.

The *evil* arising from the contrary practice of the malicious and wicked, is the more detestable, because it may rob an innocent man of his good name in the world, which is more valuable to him than his life, and against the forfeiture of it, at least to a certain extent, no vindication offered by him could in some situations avail, and from which, even the convicted slanderer, joining issue with him, could afford no entire or sufficient relief. Instead, therefore, of hearkening to the insinuations of the censorious, or the reproaches of the spiteful, the pious and good man turns from them his ear, and believes them not. He considers it as a proof of the depravity of human nature, that a bias to such malevolence should prevail among men, and have an unrestrained and shameless currency in the world, from whence jealousies are excited, and enmities cherished; and a single spark but once blown upon by the contagious breath of envy

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or malice is kindled into a flame, deſtructive of the concord and peace of the cloſeſt and moſt engaging human ſocieties or friendſhips.

The truly pious, the innocent, and the good, it is juſtly ſaid, are the proper and allowed reprovers of all open ſin or vice. It becomes them well to diſcharge this duty; but the clamour of the ſlanderers and hypocritical commonly gets before their temperate and more equitable procedure, and prevents, in a great meaſure, the real ſervice that might be done by it to the cauſe or intereſt of religion and virtue: For although, like the Pſalmiſt, they are more hurt, and *grieve* more ſincerely than others, *when they behold tranſgreſſors*, yet they cannot adopt the manner, or follow the example of thoſe, who evidently *rejoice in the iniquity committed by others*, as if it raiſed them to a degree of ſanctity much above what their lives and actions are ſeen or known to teſtify to the world. Hence the Pſalmiſt, who was more than any man of his age expoſed to envy, and beſet with a multitude of foes, complains, that theſe ungodly and outrageous men *laid things to his charge that he knew not*, doubtleſs with a view to exculpate themſelves, and exalt their own characters, by ſuch a groſs forgery upon his actions. Upon account of this their palpable malignity, we find him expreſſing the following juſt and pathetic ſentiments, *Let the righteous ſmite me, it ſhall be a kindneſs; and let him reproach me, it ſhall be an excellent oil, which ſhall not break my head; for yet my prayer alſo ſhall be in their calamities.* Pſal. cxli. 5.

VERSE 4.—*In whoſe eyes a vile perſon is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: he that ſweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*—As the adverſaries of true piety and virtue are hateful characters, and, if avowedly ſuch, excite our juſt indignation, ſo it appears that there are others of a *feature* which deſerves our *contempt* as well as hatred. Of this character, we may juſtly underſtand the fool to be, whoſe corrupted heart prompts him, as the Pſalmiſt obſerves in the preceding Pſalm, and alſo in the 53d, to think, but not to be quite convinced in his mind, *that there is no God*

who ruleth in the heavens and in the earth. In this vain thought, however, he places much of his affected ſelf-importance and pride. He is lifted up, and exults in the conceit, *that he has no Lord over him*, to whom he is accountable for what he thinks or does; yet he finds not himſelf always at eaſe under this imagination. As the non-exiſtence of a Deity, the Creator and Preſerver of the world, can never be proved by any courſe of accurate reaſoning or argument, his mind often miſgives him, and he fluctuates unhappily between two contrary opinions. In this *dilemma*, his ſenſual and worldly paſſions, being the ſtrongeſt of his faculties, prevail over him; and he reſolves to act his part in the world, as if he believed, and was aſſured, there *was no* original cauſe of all things, no *eternal Deity*. As he rather wiſhes to be thought of the atheiſtical party, than of the believers in God, he becomes the mean ape of the former in his words and actions; while the latter, before whom he ſometimes diſſembles, and ſometimes expoſes his impiety, diſcover his *mind to be as unſtable as water*, upon which only momentary impreſſions can be made. The citizen of Zion cannot help pronouncing him not merely deſtitute of principle, but incapable of receiving any ſettled one in religion or morality. He is conſidered, therefore, to be ſuch a perſon as the Pſalmiſt properly marks with the epithet of *vile*, noting him to be of a complexion of mind at once impious and abject, fooliſh and puffed up, profligate and contemptible in the eyes of God and of good men.

It is, indeed, with reluctance and ſincere concern, that the ſervant of God looks with hatred or diſdain upon any of his fellow creatures, however they may have debaſed themſelves. It is not his pride, but their ignominious behaviour, that cauſes this diſagreeable emotion to ariſe in his mind: He would, if it were poſſible, reſtrain or ſuppreſs it altogether: But there is a zeal for the honour of God, and of pure and undefiled religion, that he cannot avoid teſtifying in a ſuitable manner, and to a certain degree. As men, in whoſe perverted minds no trait *of the love or fear of God* is to be found, can never be objects

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of his regard, he accounts it fit, and becoming him, to diſcover his averſion and hatred both to their principles and their practice. But if his heart ſhrinks back from men of this dark character, it is expanded with the ſincereſt affection and love to all them who entertain in their breaſts the ſacred principle of *God's fear*, that principle which engages his ſaints and people to his worſhip and ſervice, with a filial acknowledgment and reverence of his juſt authority over them, and a ſenſe of their obligation to obey, not with reluctant minds, but willingly, all his holy and ever righteous commandments. Of ſuch he conceives and retains the moſt honourable ſentiments. Conſcious of the bleſſed effects produced in his own ſoul, by the operation of this principle, he ſays, Who are ſo worthy to be honoured as thoſe whom God himſelf hath highly honoured with an internal character, by the work of his divine grace in their renewed minds, which are adorned with the beauty of holineſs, and the luſtre of diſtinguiſhed and exemplary virtue? *Yea*, what pre-eminence, what dignity is to be ſeen in the world, comparable to this exhibition of it? The oſtentation of all earthly wealth and riches, all outward pomp and ſplendor, is mean and deſpicable, and no more than emptineſs and vanity, when put in balance with this only true dignity of the human nature. It is *the image* of God in the ſoul of man which, although faintly traced, claims reverence and honour: By it the pooreſt and loweſt of mankind are exalted in the eye of the Deity; and ſo they will be beheld by all thoſe among men who venerate and adore his amiable and glorious perfections. Even ſuch as can diſtinguiſh *good from evil*, ſpiritual rectitude from deformity of mind, will ſay, *The righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour*, and worthy to be held in high eſteem, *and in honourable and everlaſting remembrance.* Pſal. cxii. 6.

In further evidence of the ſteady integrity of heart poſſeſſed by *the citizen of Zion*, the Pſalmiſt adds, that if he ſwore *to his own hurt, he would not change:* Not that we are to ſuppoſe him inclined to ſwear any ſinful, raſh, preſumptuous, or vain oath: He dreads too much

much invoking the name of the Moſt High upon any occaſion, as to incur the guilt of profaning or abuſing it in theſe, and the like heathenish and forbidden ways. Inſtructed by the divine law, with reſpect to the nature and kind, the tendency and extent of all ſacred and lawful vows, or ſuch as God had required or permitted to be taken by his holy word, he knows it to be a penal tranſgreſſion to *open his lips* unto any other: But even in the caſe of an authoriſed engagement, he accounts it *better not to vow, than to vow and not pay.* Eccleſ. v. 5. For, as the Pſalmiſt is here to be underſtood to ſay, So binding, ſo inviolable with him, is the ſanctity of an *oath*, or a deliberate and voluntary *vow*, in the *name of God*, that were its fulfilment to be attended with the greateſt temporal loſs to him, even that of his life, he will not think himſelf acquitted from its obligation. Therefore we find the Pſalmiſt ſo often expreſſing the deep ſenſe he had of all his ſacred engagements, and repeating ſo frequently as he does, his ſteady reſolution to perform them in a conſcientious and punctual manner. *Thy vows*, ſays he, *are upon me, O God: I will render praiſe unto thee. I have ſworn, and I will perform what my lips have uttered. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the preſence of all his people.* Pſal. lvi. 12.—cxvi. 17.

Verse 5.—*He that putteth not out his money to uſury, nor taketh reward againſt the innocent. He that doeth theſe things ſhall never be moved.*—With theſe words, the Pſalmiſt concludes his portrait of the character of the citizen of Zion. Slightly conſidered, they may appear to be precepts not ſo eminently moral as the other principles of religion and righteouſneſs he had before pointed out: But, upon proper attention, they will be found connected with a ſubject of much importance in all the civilized ſocieties of men, and in the diſcuſſion of which, various and different opinions and ſentiments have been delivered by the moſt intelligent ſpeculatiſts in morals and policy. The point to be determined was, what regard ought to be paid to the caſe of the poor and indigent, or thoſe [illegible] circumſtances

ces and accidents inevitable in human life, were reduced to ſtarving penury and want; and in what way proviſion was to be made, or relief afforded for their neceſſities. Beſides, the feelings of human ſympathy, prompting to the appointment of ſome meaſure for their ſupport, it would appear to all, who had the leaſt notion of a ſuperintending Deity in the world, that it was a duty incumbent upon men to co-operate with his providential care over them, and all his creatures, by *helping* the helpleſs, and doing all they could to preſerve thoſe of the human race who *were ready to periſh*. It could hardly eſcape the notice of the rudeſt nations, that, being men liable to infirmities and diſtreſſes, they ought to ſhow that mercy and compaſſion to others which they expected from them: Yet, as it cannot be ſaid with truth, that this natural and obvious principle operated in any conſiderable degree among the uncivilized tribes of mankind, and what was more, to the diſgrace of human nature, unenlightened from above, it was diſregarded and counteracted in ſome of their moſt poliſhed ſtates. The *Athenian* laws permitted parents to expoſe their new-born or young children to death, when they were numerous, and accounted to be too heavy a burden.

As in many kingdoms and ſtates, the extortions of the rich upon the poor, upon account of money lent, proved a ſource of much injuſtice and oppreſſion, and often, as we know from hiſtory, of civil diſſenſions and broils, the Pſalmiſt here ſtates it to the honour and praiſe of the inſtitutions of the *Moſaic* Law, as well as to the particular commendation of the citizen of Zion, whoſe heart diſpoſed him to conform to it, that *uſury*, in any ſhape, was prohibited among the tribes of *Iſrael*. The ſtatute we read, Deuter. xxiii. 19. *Thou ſhalt not lend money upon uſury to thy brother; uſury of victuals, uſury of any thing that is lent upon uſury.* It is added, *But to a ſtranger thou mayeſt lend upon uſury, but to thy brother not; that the Lord thy God may bleſs thee in all that thou ſetteſt thine hand to in the land whither thou goeſt to poſſeſs it.* Here, let it be obſerved, eſpecially for the inſtruction of thoſe who, as in ſeveral other points they do, would conſider what

what was preſcribed to the people of Iſrael, placed in peculiar circumſtances, and to whom laws, ſome *ceremonial*, ſome *civil* and *political*, were graciouſly and wiſely adapted to their ſituation, to be obligatory upon nations to whom God had aſſigned a different lot, whether in the diſpenſation of his providence, or the gifts of his grace. Thoſe who read this ſtatute about uſury, and take it in the literal ſenſe, will condemn all lending of money upon an equitable and regulated *premium* or recompence for the favour, as contradictory to the law of God. They do not obſerve, that, by the letter of the commandment itſelf, an Iſraelite was permitted to take *uſury upon money from a ſtranger*; therefore, it could not be *ſinful* in itſelf, but only by the avaricious diſpoſition, and the extortion teſtified on the part of the lender, which, whether practiſed to a ſtranger, or to a ſon of Iſrael, was an immorality alike culpable by the divine law.—Again, it is not conſidered, that the lending money at a reaſonable rate of its value could be no more an unjuſt or rigorous exaction among natives and brethren of the ſame country, than taking a certain ſtipulated rent from them, for the grant of a temporary poſſeſſion of land. The account to which the borrower of money could turn it, might be no leſs profitable to him, than what the labours of the huſbandman could produce; with this difference between them, that the latter run no ſuch hazard of loſing his property, as what the former, notwithſtanding all his prudence, might incur.

There is, therefore, a *ſpecies* of *lending to the* poor, which is not only approved in the divine word, but made part of the character of the *citizen of Zion*, who *putteth not out his money*, as the *uſurer* does, to gratify his avarice, and ſwell his ſtore of it, but from a cordial deſire to aſſiſt the indigent and honeſt, and enable them to make profit of what is lent to them; for, although it be not an abſolute gift, without reſtitution being required, it may have a moral effect upon the borrowers, which a deed of *charity* is not ſo calculated to produce, by encouraging their honeſty, and promoting their induſtry at the ſame time. The Pſalmiſt, we find, marks it as a ſpecial quality of the

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good man, that he ſhoweth favour and lendeth; while in this, as in other matters, he proceeds with proper conſideration and judgment of what he does, and how the principle of juſtice and equity, and the more liberal one of favour and charity might be to moſt advantage maintained and honoured in the commonwealth of Iſrael.

The prohibition of *lending money upon uſury* enjoined to that people, beſides preventing the abuſes to which it was liable, and marking the cloſe ties by which the kindred tribes were united, appears to have been given with a view to the political condition in which it was the will of God that they ſhould be placed, when put in *poſſeſſion of the land* of Canaan. This was all the earthly inheritance promiſed to them; and it became them to be contented with it, and not to aſpire after that *artificial* wealth created in other nations by foreign commerce, and that introduced among them the pernicious baits of intemperate *living and luxury.* As a bar againſt theſe evils, and to prevent or obſtruct a too great intercourſe with the Gentile nations and ſtrangers, which might corrupt both their religious and moral principles, it was permitted to the *Iſraelites* to take *uſury* upon money lent to them, that there might be the leſs inducement, upon the part of theſe nations, to borrow from them, and that the *circulating ſpecie* they had might be kept among themſelves, and applied not to increaſe the hoards of it among the rich, but to the neceſſary and more valuable purpoſes of improving the fertility of their lands, by honeſt labour and induſtry. The children of *Iſrael* never had been or were a *commercial people.* Their forefathers *were ſhepherds;* and when they were brought into *Canaan*, they had only to join to their knowledge in rearing and increaſing their *flocks* and their *herds*, that of the proper cultivation of their lands, which was almoſt equally fitted for both. But they were required to look for the ſpecial favour and bleſſing of God upon their induſtry, either in the one way or in the other, without which their toil would prove unſucceſsful. To engage and bind them the more to the due acknowledgment of the *Divine Being*, as the author and giver of all their mercies *temporal and ſpiritual*, the *promiſe*

of the former and latter rain from heaven in its due ſeaſon, and ſuitable quantity, was made to them; and the fulfilment of it declared to depend upon their piety towards him, and obedience to his holy law and righteous commandments.

The territory of Judea was of narrow compaſs, and yet, from the vegetable power of the earth, augmented by induſtry, a larger proviſion of food for man, and the beaſts ſubſervient to him, might be found in it, than in a country far more extenſive. Upon the *top of the barren mountain, a handful of corn could be brought forth, plenty would come to its cities, and its children would grow up as graſs in the fields.* Shut up within land, and having no *ſea-port* until the reign of Solomon, the tribes of Iſrael were to conſider themſelves as placed in a better condition than if, as in the days of that king, the gold of Ophir had been poured in upon them, and ſilver ſo abounded as to be of no more account than the *ſtones* of the earth, while deſpiſing the labours of the field, or thinking themſelves exempted providentially from them, they had to purchaſe precariouſly, and at the will of other nations, what God had made the *firſt* and moſt general requiſite for the ſubſiſtence of mankind. As after the fall their families could not be maintained in life without complying with the divine commandment, *to till the ground*, and as for ſome alleviation of the *penalty* God is ſaid in Scripture to inſtruct the huſbandman, and *to teach him*, by means of the natural faculties he is provided with, how to proceed in the appointed taſk, no Iſraelite was to look upon it with diſdain; and the true *citizen of Zion* was to conſider himſelf as honouring the commandment, and contributing moſt to his own private benefit, and that of the public, when he put *out his money in fertilizing the ground, and in planting his own vine, and in rearing his own* fig-tree, that, ſitting under its ſhade, he might rejoice over his labours; and, regarding them as bleſſed of God with ſucceſs, he might have ſatisfaction and comfort in them; which the greateſt heaps of gold and ſilver, collected around him by *avarice* and *uſury*, could never have afforded.

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The laſt *trait* of the character aſſigned to the *indweller in Zion*, is, *that he taketh not reward againſt the innocent.* It has been obſerved, that the moral virtues are connected together, and come in aid one of another; and if it be ſo naturally, it will be much more the caſe, when they are the effects of divine inſtruction, and the *fruits of the ſpirit of God.* There is, then, not only a bond of union among them, but a *ſtrength* in that *bond*, which carries them on in a train. This appears to be exemplified in the lines of the character ſet before us by the Pſalmiſt. The man who, in his religious profeſſion, is ſincere, will be conſcientious and upright in all his dealings with men. He who neither does or wiſhes any evil to his neighbour will not defame him; and ſo, he whoſe ſoul is unwarpt with avarice, will *not take a bribe* to do injuſtice or wrong to any one. He will reject with diſdain the offer of it, although it comes in the faſhion of a *preſent*, as due to his rank and dignity. The cuſtom of courting the favour of thoſe in high ſtation by gifts and preſents made to them, as we may have obſerved from the *Scripture* hiſtory, prevailed early and univerſally in the eaſtern parts of the world; and it is not at this day laid aſide It had a manifeſt tendency to corrupt and render venal *thoſe* who ſat in the ſeats of juſtice and judgment. The Pſalmiſt, therefore, had the greater reaſon to mark it as a ſpecial virtue in the citizen of Zion, that acting either as an *arbiter* or a *judge*, no temptation from the *mamman* of *unrighteouſneſs* will ever induce him to *take a reward* to the injury or prejudice of *the innocent man.*

As the bleſſed and happy effect of ſuch a character, the Pſalmiſt pronounces, that the perſon poſſeſſed of it ſhall never *be moved;* not that we are to underſtand by theſe words, his attainment of ſuch a ſtate of mind as a *ſect* of the ancient philoſophers aſcribed to their *wiſe man*, whoſe happineſs they ſuppoſed to conſiſt in his having not only the maſtery over all irregular and turbulent paſſions found in human breaſts, but along with this, a *tone* of mind which excluded emotions or affections of whatever kind that tended in any degree to diminiſh or interrupt the uniform and perfect compoſure of his ſpirit.

By what means ſuch a ſtate of mind was to be acquired, and ſuppoſing it poſſible, how it could conſtitute the felicity of man in this life, as it is not to be conceived, and the Scripture delivers no ſuch doctrine, we cannot imagine that the Pſalmiſt alluded to it in the leaſt, when he ſays of the *citizen of Zion*, that *he ſhall never be moved*; yet there is a conſtancy of mind poſſeſſed by him, which, although it renders him not unmoved by, or inſenſible to the troubles and diſtreſſes of human life, proves him to be invincible by them. His *faith*, his *hope*, and truſt in God, he will not reſign in the midſt of the ſevereſt preſſure of them. In the earthly and weak tabernacle of the body, he cannot be unaffected or unſhaken more or leſs by them, eſpecially when they are ſuch as annoy not his body only, but wound his *ſpirit and heart*. A human mind impenetrable by trouble, is a *chimera* as great as an animal body unſuſceptible of pain. But, notwithſtanding, it may be, and, as the Pſalmiſt intimates, ſometimes in the order of divine providence, that a righteous perſon ſhould have a quicker feeling of afflictions, and a larger ſhare of them, than other men; yet revering the will of God in this appointment, and inſtructed in its wiſe deſign and bleſſed tendency, he acquieſces in it; and, with a compoſure of ſpirit, truſts that the Lord will be nigh to ſupport him *in ſix, yea in ſeven troubles;* and, however many or great they be, will give him at length a happy deliverance *out of them all.*

But the words in the original, *He ſhall never be moved*, may be as properly tranſlated, as we find them rendered in the cxiith Pſalm; where it is ſaid of the righteous man, *That ſurely he ſhall not be moved for ever;* an expreſſion which has a plain reference both to the invariable conſtancy of his happineſs, and the perpetuity of it, as unbounded by time. As this ſtate can never be found in the body, as even the ſpiritual mercies and bleſſings afforded to the faithful ſervants of God here upon earth are limited in duration and in meaſure, their attainment of a ſtate or place that is fixed and permanent, and from which they will not be removed for ever, is unintelligible, and

and not to be comprehended, unleſs with relation to a life that is to come in the world of ſpirits. So ſhort, ſo uncertain and changeable is their condition in this life, that it can hardly be called an *abode*. It is no more than an introduction to, and a preparation for their *dwelling* in the *holy hill of the Lord*. Therefore, we find the Pſalmiſt deſcribing this change in a metaphorical and beautiful ſtrain: *They*, ſays he, *that firmly truſt in the Lord ſhall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jeruſalem, ſo the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth and even for ever.* Pſalm cxxvth.

The improvement of the Pſalm may well be ſaid to be included in its inſtructive precepts, which are chiefly moral and practical. They demonſtrate how, and by what means the *man of God may be rendered perfect in every good thought, word, and work*, ſo far as perfection, in theſe inſtances, can be ſuppoſed in this life attainable. If, as has been obſerved, they have their parallel in ſome other Pſalms, it is a proof of the *identity* of their original; and that what I have ſaid of David being an *intelligent and able moraliſt*, is a very defective commendation, and meant only in reſpect of the natural faculties which God had given him, and he had improved; ſo that even in this eſtimate of his knowledge and abilities, it might be truly ſaid of him, *that he had more underſtanding than all his teachers, becauſe the divine teſtimonies were his daily ſtudy and meditation.* But when we conſider what he writes of divine and moral truths, not as a ſtudent only of the law of God, but as a prophet enlightened from above, and inſpired to unfold and indite, for the benefit of *Iſrael*, all its holy precepts, our judgment of him muſt be, that he has no equal except among his fellow penmen of the Scriptures, dictated by the ſame ſpirit; and that, in the ſummary given of thoſe truths in this and the other Pſalms referred to, there is a fund of wiſdom and inſtruction, in compariſon with which the wiſe ſentences pronounced by the moſt intelligent in the Heathen world are at beſt but a mixture of

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light and darkneſs, like the clouded and obſcure face of the morning, before the ſun comes forth to illuminate the world with the ſplendor of his rays.

LECTURE VI.

PSALM XXIII.

OF all the Pſalms of David, this has been reckoned by many the one that hath ſignally engaged the attention, and captivated the hearts of the pious and devout worſhippers of the Supreme Being, the Creator and the gracious preſerver of mankind: More eſpecially, it is known to have recommended itſelf to the memory and daily rehearſal of thoſe who in their early years, were trained up to, and imbibed religious impreſſions. Sweet, indeed, to their thoughts, and grateful to their ears, might the ſtrains prove, when we conſider the affecting and tender ſentiments expreſſed in it, and how adapted they are to cauſe the ſeeds of religion bud forth in their youthful minds, as yet but beginning *to learn the ways of God.*

It appears to have been compoſed by David, when attending upon his father's flocks, he was, by the divine direction, fixed upon by Samuel; and, although the youngeſt of the ſons of *Jeſſe*, was annointed in the midſt of his brethren with the oil appropriated to the head of royalty, as a ſign and pledge of his being deſtined to attainment of it in due time, as we read, 1 Sam. xvi. 13. Where it is ſaid, *that the ſpirit of the Lord came upon David, from that day forward.* This Pſalm, therefore, may well be conſidered as a record of the firſt dictates of that divine inſpiration, with which his many ſacred ſongs were afterwards

wards honoured and bleſſed, not only for his own ſpiritual edification and benefit, but for that of the whole religious congregations and people of *Iſrael.* Upon the ſtile and compoſition of the Pſalm, it is pleaſant to obſerve, that an alluſion is made in ſeveral verſes to the paſtoral or ſhepherd's life, in which David had been almoſt from his infancy trained. He knew not, until he received the holy unction from Samuel, that any other life was deſigned for him; and we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that his ſpirit trembled betwixt fear and hope, upon looking forward to the great change that was to be made in his condition. As it was the appointment of God, he did not expreſs an averſion to it; but there is ſcarcely a doubt that his ſpirit would be for a time overwhelmed, and his imagination ſuggeſt to him a variety of apprehenſions.

The way to the ſovereignty was beſet with many obſtacles and dangers; and he could not but know, if he did attain it, what vaſt difference there would be betwixt waving the peaceful ſtaff of a ſhepherd, and wielding the ſceptre of royal authority over Judah and the tribes of Iſrael. What, therefore, the divine ſpirit now dictated to him upon this occaſion, was encouraging and conſolatory. If the outward circumſtances of his life underwent ſo great an alteration, there was one part of it, which he had choſen as the beſt, that could not, by any will of man, be taken from him. Of his piety, his faith, and truſt in the living God, no enemy could rob him. He enters, therefore, into a contemplation, and brings forward to the view of his mind the tender mercies of God to every true ſervant of his, and the gracious and ample proviſion made by him for the protection, the ſupport, and conſolation of his church and people. Theſe are chiefly of a ſpiritual kind; but when once tried and known, they are more enlivening, precious, and enduring, than the ſum total of outward or worldly good: And as the ſaints of God, in every age, have experienced, they prove more than a counterpoiſe for all the grievances, diſtreſſes, and troubles that can be met with in this mortal and changeful ſtate. But I come to explain the verſes in their order.

VERSE 1.

VERSE 1. *The Lord is my ſhepherd, I ſhall not want.*—That the Supreme Being was revealed to Iſrael under the title and deſignation of their Shepherd, appears from many paſſages in the Old Teſtament. He is ſaid by the Pſalmiſt, in alluſion to this title, to *have led his people through the wilderneſs* like a flock, by the hands of Moſes and Aaron; and in the 80th Pſalm he addreſſes God under this ſpecial name, *Give ear, O Shepherd of Iſrael, who leadeſt Joſeph like a flock; thou that dwelleſt between the cherubims ſhine forth.* Surely no metaphorical expreſſion could be more fit to expreſs that peculiar relation by which God was pleaſed to connect himſelf with that people. It teſtified his faithfulneſs and readineſs to perform all the parts of his covenant with them. The Pſalmiſt was happy in the knowledge of this condeſcending grace of the Moſt High to Iſrael; and now that he was called, in an extraordinary manner, to act another and very different part in life than what he had hitherto done, he takes the privilege of calling God *his Shepherd;* who, having ordained this new lot for him, would not fail to render it not only a practicable, but a highly honourable one to him; ſo that what he wanted of ability, aid, or counſel, would be abundantly afforded to him. He underſtood, and had, as far as was competent to his years, diligently performed the office of the natural ſhepherd. He had watched, and *gone out* and in with the ſheep under his charge. If, then, his care and vigilance had availed and miniſtered to the ſafety and the good of thoſe animals, he concludes, that he would reap far higher benefit and advantage, from being taken under the cuſtody of the *Shepherd of Iſrael*, who knows not to ſlumber or to ſleep; and whoſe underſtanding of the wants of all his creatures is infinite, and his providential care and tenderneſs extended to them in ways and manners tranſcending their utmoſt thought or computation.

VERSE 2. *He maketh me to lie down in green paſtures: He leadeth me beſide the ſtill waters.*—The Pſalmiſt appears, from theſe words, to have been carried into a holy and happy tranſport of ſoul, upon the

the proſpect of participating in the ſpiritual mercies and benefits of the ſanctuary of God. He even conſiders himſelf as being already put in the immediate fruition of them, although he being yet kept at a diſtance from the holy place of the tabernacle, there was given him now only a foretaſte of them. Even this was ſufficient to afford great delight to his ſoul, and to cauſe him to ſay of God, *that he made him to lie down in green paſtures, and led him by the ſtill waters;* a metaphorical expreſſion of his happineſs and joy, which has much beauty and propriety in it, and that was very naturally uſed by the Pſalmiſt, converſant as he was with the peace and pleaſure of the paſtoral life; as if he had ſaid, having often obſerved that natural pleaſure enjoyed by the flock, when being paſtured and fully fed upon the green and tender graſs, they repoſed themſelves, after enduring the heat of the day; they were led to the cool, the clear, and quiet pools of water: This I now conſider as an image and picture of the ſpiritual ſolace and comfort I ſhall receive in attending the ſacred and ſolemn ordinances of the divine appointment: For what the green herb, or wholeſome plant, is in the natural world, that the *vineyard*, which God has planted upon earth, is in the ſpiritual one. There grow the ever greens and fruits of *paradiſe*, which, by the bleſſing of God, nouriſh the ſoul unto everlaſting life: There are found, by the watering of the word, and the pouring down of the divine ſpirit, the ſprings and wells of ſalvation. Therefore, ſays the Pſalmiſt, upon further and repeated experience of theſe delightful communications, *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God. My ſoul thirſteth for God, for the living God: when ſhall I come and appear before him?* Pſalm xlii. For, adds the Pſalmiſt, verſe 3. *He reſtoreth my ſoul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteouſneſs for his names ſake.*

Whether from infirmity, inſeparable from human nature, the ſpirit of man is inclined to deviate from, or become faint and languid in the performance of required duty, or whether diſſatisfied that his beſt endeavours to do good, and be uſeful to others in the world,

have proved ineffectual: In either or all ſuch caſes, where there is a failure or ſtop made in the ſervice of God and practice of duty, by any of his true worſhippers, it will be found, that, if they wait on the Lord, and ſeek ſtrength from him, it ſhall be given them: Nay, before the requeſt is uttered, or their cry comes before him, he will often prevent them by his grace; ſo that in the time of their greateſt fear that they may ſlide, or turn back from his ways, their ſpirit ſhall be ſuddenly quickened; and, to their aſtoniſhment, new vigour and ſtrength made to ariſe in the midſt of their weakneſs; and this, the Pſalmiſt adds, will be done to them for the honour of his name, whom they have profeſſed, and endeavoured to ſerve with ſincerity of heart.

It conſiſts not with the glory of his grace in the world, that ſuch ſhould be ſeen forſaken by him, and overcome in the ſtruggles they have with their own weakneſs, and their many ſpiritual and temporal enemies. Thoſe, therefore, to whom he has ſhown the path of righteouſneſs, and enabled to make ſome progreſs in it, he will ſtill hold by the hand; ſo that if they ſtumble, or fall into tranſgreſſion, they ſhall ariſe again; if they ſit in the darkneſs of affliction or trouble, the God in whom they have truſted ſhall be *a light unto them;* which, in the view and approach of death, ſhall not fail but deliver them from the dread of this laſt enemy. *Yea, though I walk through the valley and the ſhadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy ſtaff they comfort me,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, verſe 4.—If, in this natural life of man, there be any period ſweeter and more pleaſant than another, it may be reckoned the firſt or introductory one, when every object ſeen in nature is new, and proves a *regale* to the ſenſes. In proportion to the pleaſure felt in natural life, the love of it grows the ſtronger; and nothing is ſo hateful and horrible as the thought of death, and the removal from all that is agreeable in the *land and light of the living.* Yet, at this tempting ſeaſon of life, the Pſalmiſt here declares, that he could look upon death and the grave without terror; and, although it appeared to him, and to all men, a dark and cloudy *vale,* yet he feared no evil

evil from it. That David was no vain boaſter in this affirmation, we may judge from the early venture he made of his life, by repelling an attack made upon the flock under his charge; the account of which he gave to Saul, who diſtruſted his courage and ability to go forth againſt the gigantic Philiſtine Goliah, who defied the armies of Iſrael. *Thy ſervant*, ſaid he, *kept his father's ſheep; and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after the lion, and ſmote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he aroſe againſt me, I caught him by the beard, and ſmote him, and ſlew him.* 1 Sam. xvii. 34. In this encounter, he, doubtleſs, had an immediate impulſe upon his ſpirit from God; and in the faith of its being repeated, he went out, and, with a ſling and a ſtone whirled from it, laid proſtrate on the ground the enormous bulk of the inſulting Philiſtine. But we muſt obſerve, that when he ſays here, that though he walked through the *valley* and *ſhadow* of death, he would not be in terror, he ſpeaks the language of one more confirmed and made ſtronger in the faith, and who felt ſuch power of it in his ſoul, that he could at any time take a calm view of death, in whatever ſhape it might be preſented to him.

There are many who can take a ſudden and blind leap into death, who have no ſenſe whether they are going; and who, if they were laid upon a bed of ſickneſs or languiſhing, and had time to reflect and conſider its awful face, would ſhrink from it with the fear and timidity of children. To contemplate it with calmneſs and compoſure of ſpirit, belongs only to the godly man, who, like the Pſalmiſt, acquainted with the revelation of God's holy covenant, for the redemption of human ſouls from death, is enabled, by faith in it, to ſay with him, *I have ſet the Lord always before me; becauſe he is at my right hand I ſhall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in hope*, of that reſurrection that will be exemplified in the perſon of the Redeemer; who being the holy one of God, will not be ſuffered, even in his bodily part, to ſee corruption; but as the Prince of Life ſhall riſe quickly out of the grave, and aſcend up into

heaven, for aſſurance to his redeemed that their corruptible part, ſhall, in the appointed time, and in a ſimilar manner, put on incorruption, and they, in their heavenly faſhioned bodies, be made to ſee God. Pſalm xvi.

Of their attaining this felicity, ſays the Pſalmiſt, the fatherly correction they receive in this life from the hand of God, may be regarded as a proof. It is becauſe he loves them as his children, and deſires to keep them from evil, that he holds the rod of diſcipline over them. They are made ſenſible that it is their great ſafety to be ruled by it, as, that without the exerciſe of it, they would go aſtray; and, where it is not neceſſary to be uſed, he gives them the ſtaff of his grace to ſupport their ſteps in any difficult way. It makes them rely with a holy confidence on his word and promiſes, *that he will never leave them nor forſake them; but be their God and their guide even unto death.* To it they are not driven forcibly and with reluctance, on their part, as the wicked and ungodly are; but they hear, obey, and follow the ſtill and attractive voice of the Shepherd of their ſouls: *Fear not, for I am with you*; the darkneſs will quickly be changed into the light of day. With this word and voice, the Pſalmiſt's ſoul appears to have been encouraged and cheered, when he wrote another memorial of his faith and hope in God, ſimilar to what he here expreſſes, Pſalm lxxiii. *Nevertheleſs, I am continually with thee: thou upholdeſt me by my right hand. Thou wilt güide me with thy counſel while here, and afterwards receive me to thy glory. For though my heart and my fleſh may fail; yet God is the ſtrength of my heart and my portion for ever.*

Here we might ſuppoſe, that the Pſalmiſt had come to a concluſion of his theme; but his heart, overflowing with gratitude to God, ſuffered him not to ſtop. He repeats, with cordial pleaſure, the ſenſe and deep impreſſion he retained of the divine favour, ſo ſignally exerciſed towards him. As he had touched before the capital points of his ſpiritual mercies, he thought it became him next to recite thoſe of a temporal kind, which, although incomparably inferior, were no

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leſs eminently and bountifully beſtowed. *A table*, ſays he, *haſt thou prepared for me*, ſo completely furniſhed with every thing requiſite or deſirable, that my inveterate enemies behold it with equal envy and admiration; they who hoped and expected to find me fallen a prey to want and miſery in the deſarts, *My head alſo they ſee anointed with oil*, as one raiſed to a ſtate of dignity above his brethren and fellows: And what can I ſay more, *but that my cup runneth over:* Whence is produced a hope and perſuaſion, that he who hath *led me by the hand* to this condition of temporal honour, will not leave me unſupported by his grace, but follow me with his promiſed *goodneſs and mercy all the days I have to paſs in this mortal life.* Nay, the Pſalmiſt's faith carried him to the proſpect of a ſtate of felicity, that could be but partially enjoyed in this life, however favoured with mercies both ſpiritual and temporal. *And I will dwell*, ſays he, *in the houſe of the Lord for ever.* The grounds he had to entertain this proſpect and reſt in it with a degree of confidence, were no other than what every true and faithful ſervant of God is permitted and encouraged, by his bleſſed *word of ſalvation*, to aſſume to himſelf, and which have been pointed out in the explication of the verſe immediately preceding. The God of all grace and truth has not *brought life and immortality clearly to light*, only that it may be preſented to their imagination like an empty and impoſing dream, which gives a momentary amuſement to the waking thoughts, without producing any laſting or comfortable effect; but that his ſaints and people, in every age, realiſing the truth of it in their minds, may be enabled to ſay aſſuredly, with the Pſalmiſt, that God would not *leave their ſouls in the lower parts of the earth, but had opened to them the path of everlaſting life;* or with the apoſtle Paul, every one of them having the teſtimony of a good conſcience, might take comfort, and ſay, *I have kept the faith, and fought the good fight of it; my appointed courſe is finiſhed. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will beſtow at the laſt day.* This *grace of aſſurance* is given in degrees, and not only *according*

to the meaſure of faith, but as it may tend more or leſs to the ſpiritual benefit of each faithful ſoul, and alſo to the diſplay of the divine gifts in ſuch manner and extent, as may ſerve moſt to the glory of God, and the edification of his church and people in general.

After the explication of the verſes of this Pſalm ſo much at large, the improvement of it may be reduced to a few obſervations: *1ſt*, There is a benefit ariſing from early impreſſions of piety, being communicated by parents to the minds of their children, which cannot otherwiſe be attained. To be aſſured and entertain the belief that, beſides their earthly and viſible parents, they have a heavenly one, who made them, who hath a tender care for them, even like that of a ſhepherd over his flock, and who, *when father and mother both forſake them, and go to the grave, will take them under his Almighty protection*, muſt prove, beyond all other conceptions, the moſt pleaſant and engaging one to their feeble and timid minds. What comfort, equal to this, can be afforded to the offſpring of the poor, whoſe parents labour for their daily bread, and whom they may ſee in ſickneſs, or unable from circumſtances to provide for them? Their immediate and only ſupport in ſuch diſtreſs, is, that relief ſhall be commanded by their father in heaven; and that, regarding and truſting in him as *their Shepherd and provider*, *they ſhall not want* that ſuſtenance his providence affords to the meaneſt of his creatures. *2dly*, It becomes the pious and the godly to contemplate the religious ordinances of divine appointment, as intended and fitted to conſtitute *their chief joy*. How well calculated are they to ſmooth the ruffled tide of human life, to counteract our too natural propenſity to place our happineſs in the vanities of this world, which fly from us, and leave the ſoul without any ray of comfort in the hour of death? They hold forth the word of peace and reconciliation with God, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, as obtained by the mediator of it, whom God the Father having ſet over his church or fold of the faithful,

afithful, proved himſelf to be the true Shepherd of the ſheep, by laying down his life, in order to purchaſe everlaſting ſalvation for them.

LECTURE VII.

PSALM XXIV.

THE occaſion upon which this Pſalm was compoſed by David may be more diſtinctly aſcertained than almoſt any other in the ſacred collection. The piety and ſublimity of the devout ſentiments expreſſed in it, and the application of them to a particular ſubject, point out, in the cleareſt manner, the time and ſeaſon when the Royal Pſalmiſt found his ſoul moved to pour forth thoſe intereſting and exalted ſtrains. It is evident, indeed, and is generally admitted by all commentators, that this Pſalm correſponds in its ſubject with the 15th, in which we find what may be called a *conſecration hymn*, penned moſt probably upon the tranſportation of the *ark* of God from the houſe of Obed-Edom to the city of David, as we read the account of it at large, 2 Sam. vi. 11. and 1 Chron. xv. 25. But as here the ſubject is reſumed again by the Pſalmiſt, and treated in a more elevated ſtyle, and with improved ſentiments, it appears to have been the inſpired effuſion of his ſoul upon the view of the ark of God being carried from his houſe, where it was ſtill lodged within curtains as a moveable tent, to that magnificent houſe and temple which Solomon, by divine appointment, was to build, to the honour of the God of Iſrael; and of which his father David, although he was not permitted to be the builder, yet may well be reckoned the founder, by the ample and rich ſtores he provided for its

its ſplendid fabrication. As if the Pſalmiſt had been carried forward in ſpirit to a viſion of that ſolemn dedication of the temple by Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 22. the moſt auguſt one that ever was beheld upon earth, he here muſes over, and repreſents the pious ſentiments that ought to prevail in the hearts of all the true Iſrael of God, upon that and every ſuch ſimilar approach to the holy place of the tabernacle of the *Moſt High*, where he was pleaſed to diſplay a *Schechinah*, or viſible and ſupernatural token of his divine preſence, and ſay of Zion as his holy hill, *This is my reſt, and here I will ſtay.* The Pſalm is marked as a peculiar one for its degrees, that is for *pauſes* made by the prieſts and people in their proceſſion and aſcent to the hill of God; at which ſtops, the verſes or ſentences contained in the Pſalm appear to have been alternately pronounced between thoſe of the Levitical order and the tribes of the people, and generally in the form of ſuitable queſtions by the one, and reſponſes by the other, as we may obſerve from the 3d verſe of the Pſalm. The topic chiefly inſiſted upon is the moſt proper one for the ſubject that can be imagined. The Pſalmiſt deſcribes the properties and character of a true citizen of Zion; or, in other words, of the man whom the Deity chooſes and invites to approach unto him, and to dwell in his courts; and who, being here conformed in heart and life to the divine will, ſhall find that a way is opened for him to a ſtate of happineſs, pure and exalted above all change, to a city that hath foundations for ever in the heavens, whoſe builder and maker is God. But I come to explain the verſes in their order.

VERSE 1. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*—Excellent and admirable is the introduction to his ſubject here uſed by the Pſalmiſt; moſt proper and becoming it was, that the tribes of Iſrael coming to adore and worſhip the *One Eternal*, the only living and true God, ſhould have their thoughts raiſed to the contemplation of him, as the Creator, Proprietor, and Preſerver of the earth and the world around it, and

all

all the creatures contained in them; and that he who made the whole ſyſtem of beings, viſible and inviſible, was not to be conſidered with the dark eye of the Heathen nations, as circumſcribed and limited to a certain extent of place, and therefore ſhut up in temples made with hands, and ſo worſhipped by mens hands, as though he needed any thing from them, ſeeing he *giveth to all life and breath, and all things.* With what a different conception of the divine Being the Pſalmiſt was inſpired, appears from many paſſages of the Pſalms; but it deſerves particularly to be remarked, how Solomon, in his prayer before the altar of the Lord, expreſſes himſelf, and conſiders it as a wonder of divine grace, that the Deity ſhould, by any token of his immediate preſence, diſcover himſelf in this lower world; and, if he did ſo, how inadequate to his heavenly glory any receptacle of it in houſe or temple, fabricated by men, muſt appear. *But wilt thou indeed,* ſays the intelligent king, *dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much leſs this houſe that I have built?* 1 Kings viii. 27. But if, in mens works, ſome evidences are given of their underſtanding and contrivance, ſo that they may be known to be done by them, and by none of the inferior creatures, how much more muſt the divine works teſtify to all rational beings, that the author of them is poſſeſſed of infinite wiſdom, counſel, and knowledge, far ſurpaſſing all human thought or conception, as much as his unbounded power tranſcends the meanneſs and weakneſs of man's ſtrength. Of this, ſays the Pſalmiſt, verſe 2d, *For he hath founded it upon the ſeas, and eſtabliſhed it upon the floods.*—The globe of the earth bears a ſtriking teſtimony, which, conſiſting of a ſolid body, and a fluid of earth and water, is yet ſo conſtituted and arranged, that the lighter body is made to ſubſide, and the heavier one to ariſe above it; ſo that it appears to us as if the *earth was founded upon the ſeas and unſtable floods.* How this could be accompliſhed at firſt, the more ſtudious and contemplative among men have courteouſly inquired, but have not been able, by their various theories, to ſolve the difficult problem: For, not ſatisfied with the

Moſaic account, that it was effectuated by the omnipotent word of God, who ſaid, Geneſis i. 9. *Let the waters under heaven be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was ſo.* They have ſought to comprehend the mode and manner in which this amazing work was performed: yet this is but one inſtance among a thouſand that may be quoted, in which the divine procedure in the works of creation and providence, is impenetrable to the narrow and contracted underſtanding of man. It is enough for us to ſee that they are done in the deep counſels of his wiſdom, and alſo in the ways of benignity and favour to all his creatures, and more eſpecially to the children of men, who therefore, from reaſon and conviction, muſt confeſs, that *there are no works upon earth like unto the divine works;* which declare and aſcertain this world, made and upheld by him, to be his, in property, and not ours, unleſs by his gift, whom we, and all the creatures, *live, and move, and have our being, and from whom all our mercies flow.*

VERSE 3. *Who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the Lord? and who ſhall ſtand in his holy place?*—After the annunciation made in the two firſt verſes of the ſovereign dominion and rightful property the Supreme Being had in all parts of the earth, ſo that he might challenge due adoration, honour, and praiſe from its inhabitants every where; yet, as the corruption of his worſhip had generally taken place in the world, and even where men acknowledged the exalted nature and perfections of the Deity, they glorified him, not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, ſo as to perſuade themſelves he would be pleaſed with their outward ſervices, although unaccompanied with thoſe of the ſoul and heart: The tribes of Iſrael are here warned againſt any ſuch abuſe of his worſhip, *and to know better the God whom they ſerved.* The ſolemn queſtion is therefore ſounded forth to them on their firſt ſteps toward the ſanctuary of God—*Who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the Lord? and who ſhall ſtand in his holy place?* Ye who are now in readineſs to draw near to it, ſay

and

and declare, what is the diſpoſition and character of the man who ſhall be accounted not only worthy to enter the courts of the Lord, but to honour and ſerve him in an acceptable manner: To which the reſponſe is given by the people of the congregation, before inſtructed in it.

VERSE 4. *He who hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his ſoul unto vanity, nor ſworn deceitfully.*—Theſe words are a ſummary of the moral excellencies of a true worſhipper and ſervant of the Divine Being, whoſe nature is holy, whoſe law is holy, and who requires ſanctity or purification of the outward and inward man, in all thoſe who preſent themſelves in his holy place. The Pſalmiſt having more particularly traced this his character in the 15th Pſalm, which has been explained, and its import obſerved to be recapitulated here in more general terms, the probable reaſon of this was aſſigned, becauſe it was to be kept in memory, and repeated by the whole people in their ſolemn proceſſions. Two things, we muſt obſerve, are firſt ſtated in it, reſpective to the two parts of the human nature, conſiſting of body and ſoul. The Pſalmiſt begins with the firſt of them, although it be the inferior part, and generally paſſive and obedient to the motions of the ſoul, ſaying of the pious man, *that he has clean hands.* Here it is to be noted, that by a figure of ſpeech uſed in Scripture, the cleanneſs of the hands is put for that of the whole body, becauſe they are the moſt frequent inſtruments of voluntary action: But we are to underſtand the purity of the hands, or of *the outward man*, not as meaning merely a cleanſing of them from thoſe accidental or contracted ſtains which the ceremonial law required, but ſuch a ſtate and deportment of the body as teſtified abſtinence in general from all acts of intemperance, or treſpaſſes upon ſobriety and decency; which even the natural reaſon of man diſapproves, as degrading him into the brutal nature. But ſince ſuch tranſgreſſions may and do often proceed from a depravity of heart, or in which a principle of piety is but weakly rooted, and as

there are others no leſs heinous in the ſight of God, but which may be concealed from the view of men; ſuch as a form of godlineſs without the ſpirit of it, or inſincerity in the profeſſions of religious ſervice, which induce ſome to think they may diſſemble with God as they do with men; as there may be corrupt and evil thoughts, or envy, malice, and revenge indulged in the ſoul; in oppoſition to all theſe depravities, it is declared, that the citizen of Zion, or he who ſtands in that ſacred relation to God, *has a pure heart*; which is to be taken, not in the ſenſe of abſolute purity, but ſuch a meaſure of it as is conſiſtent with the ſtate of human nature, and which the ſaints of God have been, by the divine grace, enabled to attain, and whoſe faith *is ſaid to work by love to purify their hearts, and engage them to keep the commandments of God.* His true and attached ſervant, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *has not lifted up his ſoul to vanity*; by which we may underſtand, that he has none of that preſumption which leads the irreligious and ungodly to imagine they can fulfil the end of their being, and walk through life in a way ſufficiently good, although they receive not counſel and direction from above, but neglect or deſpiſe the light of revelation, in the great mercies of God vouchſafed unto men: Or we may underſtand *his not lifting up his ſoul to vanity*; as ſignifying his utter abhorrence of all thoſe idolatrous practices, by which the name of religion was profaned among the *Gentiles*, and that are often called by the prophets the vanities *of the nations*; neither, adds the Pſalmiſt, as a concluſion to the character of the ſervant of God, does he know what it is to violate truth, far leſs to take the name of God to any falſe or deceitful declaration: on the contrary, ſays the Pſalmiſt in the 15th Pſalm, *He ſpeaketh the truth in his heart; and if he hath ſworn to his own hurt, he changeth not.*

Verse 5. *He ſhall receive the bleſſing from the Lord, and righteouſneſs from the God of his ſalvation.*—As if it had been ſaid, do you aſk, O Iſrael, what will be the lot, and what the felicity of ſuch a worſhipper and ſervant of the Moſt High? The anſwer is, that God will

will command to come upon him the bleſſings and mercies of his holy covenant, in all their value and extent; which imply grace here, and glory hereafter. The life that he has led on earth, being that of faith in the promiſed ſalvation of God, it *ſhall be imputed to him for righteouſneſs*, in that day of account for the deeds done in the body; when no man's righteouſneſs, howſoever conſiderable it may be, if weighed in a juſt balance, or that of God's ſanctuary, can be found to have perfection, or even that high meaſure of it, which is required as attainable in the body: For, although the foremoſt of the faithful are enabled to go on *from one degree of grace unto another, and endeavour to reach unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the perfect man*, as fulfilled and exemplified in the life and character of their *Redeemer*; they themſelves know, and muſt confeſs, *that they have fallen ſhort*, and had not done all that they might have done, to the *glory of divine grace* that was given them: Yet, as being called of God to do honour to his name, and act the part in this life becoming the character of the citizens of Zion deſcribed in his pure word, they ſhall be pronounced *righteous*, ſo far as they have correſponded to it; although they aſſume not this title to themſelves, or imagine their beſt ſervices ſufficient to juſtify them in the ſight of an infinitely righteous and holy Deity. Their exiſtence, and that of all the creatures, whether in heaven or in earth, they acknowledge to have been the act of his eſſential *goodneſs*; and the means of their natural life of his providing; and if, on account of ſin committed, and tranſgreſſion abounding, it was rendered tranſitory and mortal; to whom belonged the power and the grace of *opening a gate* into a ſpiritual and everlaſting life, but to that God; who only worketh wonders in the intellectual world, as he doeth in the natural one. *What hath man which he has not received* as the gift of his bounty and unmerited favour? If he has the will to do good in any extent or conſtancy, it is *in him and from him*. What can his virtuous action, or utmoſt well doing, avail, in order to procure for him a life of felicity that ſhall never end? If he is to be admitted to that life of the angels of God in heaven, it muſt

either

either be in conſequence of the merit of his works, or of a *covenant of grace* obtained for him; but the firſt of theſe his conſcience will tell him he cannot plead; and the ſecond is the juſt and comfortable doctrine of the ſacred Scriptures. The pious and the meek, the good and the humble, in every age, will receive this revealed truth with gladneſs and joy, ſaying, *not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praiſe: For thou haſt laid hold upon one mighty and powerful to ſave:* Through him is communicated to us the *word of our deliverance* from the burden of ſin, that by it we may know how to ſerve the Lord in an acceptable manner, and confeſs, that we owe to his unmerited grace, the purchaſe made for us of eternal ſalvation.

VERSE 6. *This is the generation of them that ſeek him, that ſeek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.*—As if it had been ſaid, there is a variation in the characters of men of the ſame generation, country, and climate: As the faces of individuals differ from one another, ſo does the varying temper of their minds. Even the children of the ſame parents often bear but a faint reſemblance to them: God hath put the ſtamp of ſimilitude and conſtancy, not upon the outward and changeful part of the human nature, which is incapable of receiving it. If there be a character of ſameneſs or ſimilarity, ſuch as abides and can be tranſmitted from one generation to another, even from the beginning to the end of the world, it muſt be found in the diſpoſitions of the ſoul. However naturally incoherent and variable theſe may be among the ſons of men, who know and follow no other diſcipline but the unſteady and vain courſes of the world; yet among them whom God hath called to worſhip and ſerve him in his ſanctuary, there will be found a people, not joined together only by the outward forms of their religion, but ſo united by the principles of their faith, that they may be judged to have *but one heart and one mind.* They are the true citizens of Zion, whoſe characteriſtical properties have been deſcribed: To thee, therefore, *O God of Jacob*, they are known, *and ſhall be accounted of thee for a ſpiritual generation;* a ſeed diſpoſed

ſed to ſeek thee, the God of their fathers, with the ſincerity and ardour exemplified by that patriarch, when he ſtrove with the angel for a bleſſing. *He waited for thy ſalvation, O Lord*; ſo this day do we wait with the deſire, and in hope, that the light of thy countenance may be lifted upon us, and that as it was ſaid of old by him, when a heavenly viſion was given him, *Surely the Lord is in this place. This is none other but the houſe of God, and this is the gate of heaven*; ſo it may be ſeen and ſaid now, The Lord is gone up in the ſymbol of his preſence in the ark, teſtifying his ſtrength, when, in oppoſition to the will of all his and our enemies, it is placed upon the hill of Zion, there to abide. Geneſis xlix. 18. Ibid. xxviii. 16, and 17.

VERSES 7, 8, 9, 10. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be lifted up, ye everlaſting doors, and the king of glory ſhall come in. Who is the king of glory? the Lord ſtrong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlaſting doors, and the king of glory ſhall come in. Who is this king of glory? the Lord of hoſts, he is the king of glory. Selah.*—Theſe verſes, animated and ſublime as they are, both in ſentiment and expreſſion, teſtify how divinely moved the ſpirit of the Pſalmiſt was upon that ſolemn day; a day ever to be remembered in Iſrael for what was accompliſhed for them as a choſen people, and not for them only, but for all nations to whom the word of ſalvation ſhould come, in the name and miſſion of that bleſſed perſon called the *Star of Jacob*, and the *Shiloh* ordained of God to *bruiſe the head of the ſerpent*; and throw down the ſtrong holds of demoniacal ſuperſtition and ſin, *and to whom the gathering of the nations, in the appointed time, ſhould be.* In holy contemplation of the ſcene that paſſed at the transference of the ark, now no longer to have the *covering of curtains*, and to be carried from place to place, but to have a more dignified and durable ſtation in the temple to be ſoon erected for it; the Pſalmiſt appears to have felt a rapture of devotion not eaſy to be expreſſed in words, but

which

which the exalted ſtrains he uſes are admirably fitted to repreſent. His prophetic ſpirit carries him into a viſion of that day of the promiſed Meſſiah, the ſon of man; in which, after fulfilling his miniſtry upon earth, he would be glorified of God and angels, by his aſcenſion into the higheſt heaven. The *apoſtrophe* to the doors of the temple, and the call that their heads, or jointed bars, at their tops, by which they were ſhut, ſhould be lifted up for the *entry of the King of glory*, are ſtrikingly poetical, and the challenge, *who was he?* and the anſwer to it, together with the reiteration of both theſe, render the intereſting deſcription ſtill more engaging and impreſſive upon the minds of the aſſembled tribes. How might it inſpire them with conceptions of that *King of Glory, that Lord of Hoſts, ſtrong and mighty in battle*, ſuch as the Pſalmiſt himſelf entertained, and had delineated ſo particularly in the 2d Pſalm, and from whom, as the God of their ſalvation, he here ſays the *citizens of Zion* would receive a bleſſing of the higheſt nature, even that of being accounted *righteous* in the ſight of God, and worthy to be made partakers of that ſpiritual victory over *ſin, death, and hell*, obtained by their Redeemer.

They beheld in the ark conducted by David to its promiſed place in Zion, not only a type, but ſuch a valid earneſt of this triumph, as left them no room to doubt of its being accompliſhed. All the terms of the covenant made with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, ſo far as they reſpected the temporal condition of their children, were now fulfilled, or upon the point of being ſo, in the pacific and ſplendid reign of Solomon: They were in a wonderful manner rendered victorious, *and had reſt from all their enemies round about*, in that of his father: But had they, as a choſen people, a generation called to ſeek and ſerve the only living and true God, in righteouſneſs and holineſs upon his conſecrated mount, no other ſong to ſing but that of a worldly deliverance? If any of them were ſo ignorant, or ſo blinded by the God of this world, as to think of no other, no more intereſting or higher ſalvation, the Pſalmiſt repreſſes this impious deluſion and vanity of their minds, and calls them, in the exhibited character of the

true

true citizens of Zion, to conſider not only how purified in heart and mind ſuch ought to be, but to whom they were indebted for their ſpiritual ſalvation, that redemption from contracted ſin, and the bondage of iniquity, which inferred ſpiritual death. It could be owing to the interpoſition and acts of him only, to whom *belonged the iſſues from this awful doom.* Pſalm lxviii. 20. What was to be done by this bleſſed perſon, in order to procure ſo great a ſalvation for them, is not here expreſſed particularly by the Pſalmiſt. His ſuffering for the ſins of mankind is paſſed over, as not ſo conſonant to the ſtrain of this triumphal ſong; yet in the 110th Pſalm, where his victory over the enemies of his church is alſo celebrated, he alludes to it in thoſe metaphorical words, *He ſhall drink of the brook in the way: therefore ſhall he lift up the head.* The deſcription of his *aſcending on high*, given in the Pſalm above quoted, verſe 18th, and of the purchaſe he made in conſequence of it, correſponds well with that now under conſideration, *Thou haſt led captivity captive, thou haſt received gifts for men*, or, as it may be rendered, *in man;* that is, in thy human nature aſſumed for that purpoſe; *and for the rebellious alſo, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* Here let me obſerve, that the comment upon theſe words by the apoſtle to the Epheſians, chap. iv. 8. is not an arbitrary, but a moſt proper and juſt one. *Now*, ſays he, *that he aſcended what is it*, or what does it mean, *but that he alſo deſcended firſt into the lower parts of the earth? He that deſcended is the ſame alſo that aſcended up far above all viſible heavens, that he might fill all things*, or have all power given him in heaven and in earth. It was fit and right, ſays the ſame apoſtle to the Philippians, that he *who humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, ſhould be thus exalted*, and that every tongue of man, or angel, ſhould *confeſs him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* The recogniſance of him in this glorious character, by the miniſtering ſpirits who kept the *everlaſting doors of heaven*, and gave their voice for the wide opening of them, is the prophetic and figurative ſtyle of the Pſalmiſt, when he read in the type of the ark, carried up triumphantly into the hill of

God, and was inſpired to indite an event which was future, as if it had actually taken place; a ſtyle uſed by almoſt all the ſcriptural prophets, and eſpecially thoſe of them who had the divine gift of the ſongs ſacred to the tabernacle and holy altar of God.

Inſtead of pointing out, by way of improvement, upon this Pſalm, how profitable to a Chriſtian aſſembly upon a Sabbath day, the appointed memorial of Chriſt's reſurrection from the dead, their meditations upon it may prove, both for the doctrine of faith in a Redeemer, and for their inſtruction in righteouſneſs: I conclude with obſerving, that if the types of ſpiritual mercies, afforded under the law, made glad the hearts of the people of Iſrael, in the days of Moſes and David; if they ſung the ſongs of Zion with an animated devotion, how ought our ſouls to magnify the Lord, and riſe to higher notes of praiſe, ſince to us the word of ſalvation is ſent, not in the predictions of the prophets only, but in the verification of them all, by the coming of that holy one, called the *Lord our righteouſneſs;* and who, being found in *the faſhion of a man, was yet God manifeſted in the fleſh, juſtified in the ſpirit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.* Let, therefore, the deſires of our hearts aſcend daily after him; let them be opened to receive the counſel of his word, and the light of his ſpirit; *whom having not ſeen, we love; in whom, though now we ſee him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.* 1 Timothy iii. 16. 1 Peter i. 8.

LECTURE

LECTURE VIII.

PSALM XXX.

OF all diſpoſitions in the human heart, there is none more noble and excellent than the ſenſe of gratitude, and the warmth of acknowledgment for benefits received. Every ſenſible mind feels it to an earthly benefactor, to a protector from injuries, to an affectionate and ſympathizing friend, who ſmooths the bed of diſtreſs, or wipes away the tear from the eye of ſorrow. But it may be ſaid, that a religious principle moulds the ſoul to gratitude in the moſt powerful manner. It engages us to eye our Creator as the author of all the mercies we receive in life, of the favourable interpoſitions and gracious deliverances we experience, in every circumſtance of trouble and diſtreſs. Hence the Pſalmiſt, warmed with a ſenſe of the divine goodneſs to him, introduces this hymn of praiſe with thoſe ardent expreſſions, *I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou haſt lifted me up, and haſt not made my foes to rejoice over me.*—The words, *I will extol thee, O Lord*, are not to be underſtood as if the Pſalmiſt thought that the gratitude he expreſſed, or the praiſe he offered, could add any exaltation to the glory and ſplendour of the divine perfections: But we may underſtand by them, that the honour and praiſe of God, by his rational creatures, is a declaration of theſe perfections acceptable unto him; and therefore it is ſaid in the divine word, *who ſo offereth praiſe glorifies me.* The particular ſubject and occaſion of the Pſalmiſt's acknowledgment is intimated in the latter clauſe of the verſe; for, although now ſtanding in the height of proſperity, he confeſſes, with a grateful heart, that the Lord had raiſed

ſed him unto it; and he forgets not his former ſtate of depreſſion, when he appeared to be left to the will and in the power of his enemies. Theſe, ſays he, are now diſappointed of the cruel pleaſure of exulting in my calamity, and triumphing in my diſtreſs. How many inſtances are there in the world of men addicted to this deteſtable ſatisfaction, of rejoicing in the miſery of others, and whoſe ſtony hearts allow them to add affliction to the afflicted, and gall the wounded mind. Let us, in the fear of God, ſuppreſs every propenſity of this kind, which is a diſmal proof of the depravity of the human heart.

VERSES 2, & 3. *O Lord, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou haſt helped me. O Lord, thou haſt brought up my ſoul from the grave: thou haſt kept me alive, that I ſhould not go down to the grave.*—There are two things obſervable in theſe verſes; the firſt is, that the Pſalmiſt found the day of his diſtreſs a ſeaſonable time of fervent prayer; the ſecond is, that as God was pleaſed to command deliverance for him, he thought it incumbent on him to mark this gracious interpoſition of heaven in his behalf, and to put it in ſpecial record what God had done for him, that it might never eſcape from his mind. Prayer, however neglected in the time of proſperity, however contemned by the impious, and the fools of fortune, is the natural act of the mind in diſtreſs. It is a relief which the afflicted ſoul ſeeks, when it finds no help for it but in God; while the deniers of his perfections meanly humble themſelves before men, and fly for protection to thoſe in whom often there is no aid: While they bend the ſuppliant knee before their rude oppreſſors, or elſe are ſtung with the anguiſh of impotent rage, the godly are happy in having another reſource; they bow in holy reverence unto their Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth; to him they make known their prayer and their hearts complaint; they look to him with the eye of faith, and they are lightened; they implore his aid, and they are not put to ſhame; for he not only regards the prayer of the deſtitute,

tute, but he hears them in mercy, and gives them the healing of his ſanctuary, either grace and ſtrength to fight the good fight of faith in the evil day, or a ſignal deliverance from it. Thoſe who find ſuch happy effects of pious and faithful prayer imitate the manner of the Pſalmiſt: *They tell how God has brought their ſouls from diſtreſs and the grave.*

VERSE 4. *Sing unto the Lord, O ye ſaints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holineſs.*—It is one of the chief excellencies of religion, that it unites the hearts of men together, and makes one act the common joy of them all. However different in their ſtations, however diſtinguiſhed by the names and places of their abode, however divided into tribes and communities, there is a bleſſed bond of union, a happy note of harmony that connects them all; when they, in the character of the ſaints and people of God, lift up their voices together, and ſing praiſes unto him. The Pſalmiſt, animated with a ſenſe of his particular obligations to the Moſt High, calls upon all the Iſrael of God to join with him in the performance of the ſacred duty of praiſe and devout acknowledgment. Though he knew well to touch the harp with lively ſtrains, and was eſteemed the firſt and the ſweeteſt ſinger in Iſrael, he thought the perfection of ſacred harmony conſiſted in the union of the hearts and voices of the whole people of God. He believed that the eſſential part of their ſacred entertainment was placed in the tribute of a thankful heart, which he now wiſhed to be offered in the full choir of his ſaints. Theſe, ſays he, have always ſome thank offering to give, ſome memorial of the divine perfections to celebrate. His holineſs, eſpecially, is a particular ſubject of contemplation to them. That ſpotleſs purity, which is eſſential to his divine nature, is a theme on which they delight to dwell; and they aſpire in his temple to imitate, and be made, in ſome degree, conformable to it. Thankful, indeed, they may be, and penetrated ever with a deep ſenſe of his unbounded mercy, when they reflect that, though of purer eyes than to look on ſin without offence, he does not always chide, nor puniſh

niſh the iniquities of men as they deſerve: On the contrary, the humble and the penitent have cauſe to witneſs this concerning him, *That his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*—What a delightful idea does this give us of the Supreme Being; how like the declaration made of him to Iſrael, when he proclaimed himſelf the *Lord merciful and gracious, ſlow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Are there, then, among us thoſe who profeſs to know and adore this God of mercy, and yet mourn over their lot in the world, and cannot be comforted? Are there thoſe who ever repine, and perceive no gladdening ray of his favour? Surely ſuch are ſtrangers to the manifeſtations he hath given of himſelf in his works, in his word, and in his ſanctuary. All theſe are calculated to relieve the ſoul from diſtreſs, to comfort the mourners in Zion, and reſtore peace to the broken in heart. When we reflect with the Pſalmiſt, that in his favour there is life, what ſerenity and joy may this convey to the mind? A ſenſe of his grace and love muſt indeed be ſuperior to every other comfort. It enlivens and fortifies the ſoul againſt all fears and dangers; it nouriſhes a ray of hope that endures beyond the grave, and opens the proſpect of a happy and bleſſed immortality.

Verses 6, & 7. *And in my proſperity I ſaid, I ſhall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour, thou haſt made my mountain to ſtand ſtrong: thou didſt hide thy face, and I was troubled.*—The Pſalmiſt here confeſſes and records the vanity and preſumption, to which his heart gave way, when the candle of the Lord ſhone bright upon him; an infirmity too natural to the mind of man, and not eaſily avoided by the beſt in the deluding circumſtances of proſperity. Then it was he became ſecure, and ſaid preſumptuouſly, *I ſhall never be moved.* Whatever favours and mercies indulgent heaven confers; they are ſtill not given in this life as a conſtant or certain poſſeſſion; to none are they aſſigned, and by none enjoyed upon ſuch terms. There is nothing, indeed, pertaining to man but what is mutable: Health, riches, fortune, and fame

fame in the world, have all a wing to take them away. Even the virtues of the heart, if not watched over, and rendered permanent by the grace of God, will eſcape from us; and no ſeaſon or ſituation is ſo dangerous for us, as when the mind is thrown into the relaxed ſtate of proſperity. The Pſalmiſt had then the confidence to ſay unto God, and by thy favour, *thou haſt made my mountain to ſtand ſtrong:* He was not then aware that ſpiritual pride ſwelled his heart, and would have ſoon become ſo predominant over him, as to have undone his character as a humble and obedient ſervant of God. How many hateful vices might have ſprung from this root of pride, and how many amiable graces and virtues have been extinguiſhed by it; but God, in mercy and in faithfulneſs, withdrew the ray that dazzled his ſervant: He hid his face, and the cloud of adverſity came, that gloomy cloud which we all fear; and yet, without being viſited by it, our hearts would prove deceitful, and become, like the uncultivated ground, unfruitful of every virtue. We ought then to revere that divine adminiſtration, that providential government, that has appointed us a diſcipline ſuitable to our probationary ſtate.

To theſe verſes thus commented upon, I ſhall only ſubjoin the following inferences: *1ſt*, It becomes us with the Pſalmiſt to aſcribe every relief from trouble, and every happy change in our ſtate, to God. *2dly*, Every deliverance a pious mind meets with has a double ſolace in it, when conſidered as the doing of the Lord. *3aly*, Let us look to God for a victory over our ſpiritual enemies. *Laſtly*, Let the praiſes of the Moſt High have its due effect on us, by binding us together in the bonds of divine love and charity. The temple of God forms a centre of union to his people. There peace and harmony are diffuſed over their affections: There the peace of God, which paſſeth all knowledge, is made to rule in their hearts. The performance of religious ſervice promotes this peace. It repreſſes all unruly and ſinful paſſions, anger, and clamour, and wrath, and malice, and ſubſtitutes in their room the placid emotions of gratitude and love. We

feel the influence of the divine law in our hearts, which inſpires tranquillity and joy, and excites no antipathy but to ſin, vice, and pernicious appetites. In proportion, then, as we adore and love the author of all good, the gracious parent and benefactor of men, and our God and father in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, we muſt learn to imitate his excellencies, and perform ſuch acts of goodneſs, charity, and mercy, as are correſpondent to them.

LECTURE IX.

PSALM XXXII.

AMONG all the benefits which acquaintance with God procures, there is none more ſenſibly precious to the mind than the remiſſion of ſin. It is a diſpenſation of divine grace, which is communicated only to thoſe to whom God has revealed his holy covenant of mercy, to whom he hath graciouſly ſaid, *I am he that blotteth out thine iniquity, and will not remember thy ſins.* But ſuch as live within the verge of his church and ſanctuary, which opens a fountain for ſin and uncleanneſs, have occaſion to experience this happy benefit; and it is to be remembered, that they feel it always more ſtrongly, in proportion to the afflicting ſenſe they have had of their ſin and tranſgreſſion. The Pſalmiſt, who was ſmit with remorſe of conſcience, whoſe ſoul was ſtung with penitential ſorrow, whoſe ſin had preſented itſelf to him in all its diſmal colours, declares here, with the tear of joy and grateful acknowledgment unto God, the happy alteration that was wrought on his ſpirit and mind. *Bleſſed*, ſays he, *is he whoſe tranſgreſſion is forgiven, whoſe ſin is covered.*—As if he had ſaid,

'How

'How heavy hung the load of guilt on my depreſſed ſoul, when the 'terrors of the Lord ſurrounded me. How then did I think that my 'ſin was too great to be forgiven, too heinous and aggravated ever to 'be covered in the eye of a holy and juſt God. But he hath beheld 'with pity my afflicted ſoul; he hath ſpoke the word of mercy and 'peace, promiſed to his ſervant, and reſtored the broken comfort of 'my heart, *and given me occaſion to ſing more of his mercy than of his 'judgment.* The awful viſitation is paſt; and I can now proclaim 'the unſpeakable effects of the divine grace, and tell how ſweet is the 'ſenſe of his pardoning mercy.' To have our tranſgreſſions thus forgiven muſt communicate a joy equal to that of having a ſentence of death paſſed on us recalled: Nay, as the death wrought by ſin in the ſoul is ſpiritual, as it implies its ſeparation and excluſion from God's favour for ever, we cannot be happy or bleſſed until we have ſome token or aſſurance that our pardon is ſealed in heaven. If this word of redemption goes forth, our ſin is covered. The father of mercies blots it out as a thick cloud in his preſence, and remembers it no more. Our conſcience alſo ceaſes to ſtate the ſentence of God's law againſt us. Though the remembrance of it may grieve us, the bitter reproach of it is paſt; its ſting is taken away. We have the view of God reconciled to us, for we have repented, and therefore find the light of his countenance lifted up upon us.

VERSE 2. *Bleſſed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whoſe ſpirit there is no guile.*—The Pſalmiſt enters here into another view of the favour of God extended to them who live in his ſanctuary; and he appears to ſtate a caſe different from his own, which is alſo found among ſuch. There are thoſe whom he makes ſo peculiar partakers of his grace, that it may be ſaid, in a certain ſenſe, that the Lord imputes not iniquity to them; that is, though all offend, and come ſhort of the glory of God, and no man liveth and ſinneth not, yet they, either being ſanctified from the womb, or happily directed by his grace, in the different ſteps and ſtages of their life, are kept from thoſe offences which deſerve the expreſſions

of his indignation and hot diſpleaſure. They are not marked in his book as heinous tranſgreſſors; they ſmart not under galling remorſe, and the anguiſh of a guilty ſoul; they are not overwhelmed with the terrors of his law, nor made examples of the viſitations of his rod: His pure word being taken for their conductor, and his ſpirit relied on as their guide, they are preſerved from the temptations by which others fall, or are enabled to ſtrive ſo effectually againſt them, as to obtain the victory. How bleſſed is ſuch a perſon, ſays the Pſalmiſt, and how happy is his ſtate, compared to that which I have lately experienced. Every one that ſtands indebted to God for his preventing mercy, every one that is ſo kept in the ſtraight paths of his commandments, ought to be ſenſible of his felicity, and highly thankful unto God for the peculiar protection and favour vouchſafed to him. Such may learn from others, who have felt the frowns of the divine countenance, what they have eſcaped, and, walking on in the light of it, rejoice in him all the day. Perſons of this character there ſurely are in the houſe of God, whoſe peace of mind has never been broken by the commiſſion of preſumptuous and aggravated ſins. If any of us be of this claſs of the children of God, how highly ought we to value the comfortable portion of divine grace given us, aſcribing unto the great keeper of our hearts all the praiſe and glory that is due.

The Pſalmiſt further deſcribes the character of ſuch, by their being perſons *in whoſe ſpirit there is no guile*; a very ſtriking and emphatic account of thoſe who are planted in the houſe of the Lord, and cheriſhed by his grace. They have, as a diſtinguiſhed mark of their relation to God, that ſimplicity of heart and godly ſincerity which he requires: That guile of heart, ſo fatal to many, by which they yield only half their affections to God, or think they can ſerve him and Mammon together, is unknown to them: That guile, by which ſome exalt their own wiſdom, and their own righteouſneſs, againſt the truth and righteouſneſs of God, is rejected by them. As humble, meek, and lowly ſouls, they *deſire the ſincere milk of his word that they may live thereby.* Such was Nathaniel, a proſelyte

to

to Chriſt, before he ſaw him; and of whom the Saviour gave this ever memorable teſtimony, *behold an Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* If we bear not ſome reſemblance to this character, we ſhall not obtain forgiveneſs of our ſins, much leſs be numbered among thoſe who have maintained a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man.

VERSE 3. *When I kept ſilence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.*—In this verſe the Pſalmiſt returns to the conſideration of his own diſmal caſe, when ſin having got the maſtery over him, left him under its frightful effects. He ſpeaks of them as rendering him ſilent, his tongue being tied, and his ſpiritual faculties ſo locked up, that he had no will or freedom, for ſome time, to make a confeſſion of his ſin unto God, to mourn over it, and to implore the divine mercy. Being in ſome degree hardened, he kept back from this courſe, and ſeemed willing to ſtruggle with the ſenſe of his ſin, and to reſiſt the reproaches of his conſcience: But he found this temper much inflamed his diſtreſs. *The ſpirit of a man may bear outward infirmities, but a wounded ſpirit who can bear?* He could not carry this fire of guilt in his boſom, and not be burnt. The very trial to do it was like to conſume him altogether. Both body and ſoul ſuffered by it. His bones waxed old; he became like one bereft of all ſtrength, and ready to ſink into the grave. But though he had no addreſs for God, and the faculty of prayer forſook him; he had groanings at heart, and a convulſion in his ſoul, that forced an involuntary utterance, and by frequent exclamations which he made, his throat was dried, and *his moiſture*, as he expreſſes it, *was turned into the drought of ſummer.* Behold, my brethren, in this a ſtriking picture of a mind ſtruggling with the ſtings of conſcience, ſeeking in itſelf reſt, and finding none; incapable then of a *godly ſorrow that worketh repentance unto ſalvation.* Think of this ſad caſe, and tremble, all ye workers of iniquity. Think if your *hearts can endure, or your hands be ſtrong in the day in which God may ſo deal*

with you. Think of him who ſuffered the terrors of the Lord, *and was diſtracted.* And while you endeavour to ſmother the checks of your conſcience, and conceal your iniquity, think how it fared with the Pſalmiſt David, the ſervant of God, when he attempted to do ſo. Then was the hand of God laid heavy upon him day and night, with a preſſure that he could not bear. Then did he hear and indite the declaration of God againſt every wicked man. *Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence: thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a one as thyſelf; but I will reprove thee, and ſet thy ſins in order before thine eyes. Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* Pſalm l. 21.

LECTURE X.

PSALM XXXIV.

THE title prefixed to this pſalm, if admitted to be properly inſcribed, aſſigns the particular occaſion upon which it was compoſed by David; an unhappy one, indeed, it is ſaid to have been, when, as it is recorded, 1. Samuel xxi. 13. *he*, whoſe intrepid ſpirit had braved many dangers, found his heart give way to fear, ſo that, ſeeing the *wilds* and *deſerts* of Judah afforded him no protection againſt the inceſſant perſecutions of Saul, he fled for refuge to *Gath*, the chief city of the Philiſtian King *Achiſh*, but who, in the title of the pſalm, is called by the more honourable name of *Abimelech*, ſignifying Prince and Father of his tribe or nation. If David had reſolved to meet certain and immediate death, he could hardly have taken a more direct courſe to it. Upon his entry into Gath, although,

though, perhaps, in diſguiſe, he is ſoon found out, and known to be that *hero* of Iſrael, that formidable foe to the Philiſtines, of whom the daughters of Judah had ſung in triumph, that *Saul had ſlain his thouſands, but David his ten thouſands.* Surrounded by the multitude, he is immediately preſented before *Achiſh* as a choice captive that had fallen into their hands. What was, in this ſituation, the ſtate of his mind, or, if he reflected at all, what were his thoughts of ſuch prepoſterous conduct, it is difficult to form a probable conjecture. That he would be put into confuſion, there is no doubt: But ſhall we ſay, that, having determined, before he took his rout to *Gath*, to throw away his life, being wearied of its many diſtreſſes, he might be, in a great meaſure, compoſed and prepared to undergo the worſt that could befal him? This reſolution could not be formed without renouncing entirely his truſt in God, and embracing the impious tenet that the life given him might be diſpoſed of at his pleaſure. But if, from trouble and perplexity, this deſperate thought was ſtarted in his mind, could he not, with more conſiſtency of character and credit to himſelf, although no leſs culpably, have ſought his purpoſe in a day of battle?

But it may ſtill be alleged, that he had a degree of compoſure, otherwiſe he could not have deviſed the ſtratagem of feigning inſanity before *Achiſh*, with a view or hope of his life being ſpared. Extreme dread and deſpair will, indeed, catch at a ſhadow for preſent relief; yet what appearance in reaſon, or what glimpſe of hope could there be, that his behaviour in the preſence of the Philiſtian king, as one unſound in mind, would excite either commiſeration of his apparent unhappy caſe, or ſuch contempt and diſdain of his now humbled adverſary, as, without ordering him to be looked after, or pouring out ſome heatheniſh imprecation againſt him, to command only that he ſhould be taken inſtantly out of his ſight? Achiſh muſt have been of a temper far more humane and ſympathiſing than was known in that ferocious age; or elſe he ſuffered his enmity to David to evaporate in a fit of haughty and exulting pride,

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which dictated a treatment of him as an object no longer worthy of his indignation and wrath, but of his ſarcaſtical deriſion and ſcorn.

What, then, is the inference from theſe premiſes? Is it not the juſt and unavoidable one, that David, thrown into a ſituation the moſt perilous that can well be imagined, found a deliverance from the hands of his vengeful enemies, which cannot reaſonably be attributed to the very precarious and pitiful device he employed, nor to a natural relenting, or turning the mind of Achiſh in a way not to be accounted for, but from the ſpecial interpoſition of God in behalf of his forlorn ſervant? Thus, a manifeſt proof was given, that even when his true worſhippers, through the imbecility of human nature, and in a dark day of tribulation, have taken *counſels of their own* for ſafety, which neither became, nor could avail them; yet he forſakes them not utterly; but, regarding them with an eye of mercy, proves himſelf their all-gracious and powerful help and deliverer.

The announcing the import of the title of the Pſalm has brought forward to our view a paſſage in the life of David, which, as it relates to his behaviour in very trying circumſtances, could not well be paſſed over without the explication and remarks that have been offered upon it. Beſides its being a part of his character, liable, in the judgment of ſome, to criticiſm and ſiniſter reflections, ſeveral reſpectable commentators have entertained a doubt about the authenticity or propriety of the ſtated title: For, although, in the introductory part of the Pſalm, a ſignal deliverance from ſome imminent danger be the *theme* inſiſted upon, yet the terms in which the Pſalmiſt's acknowledgment and thankſgiving unto God are expreſſed, appear ſo general and indefinite, that they may as well be applied to ſome other inſtance, among the many he had of the divine protection exerciſed toward him, as to that ſpecified in the title. Whether, therefore, this objection to it be a valid one, or not, it may be proper to obſerve, that in the ſurvey of the whole pſalm, we do not find (if we except the 4th, 6th, and 7th verſes) what may be interpreted, not to ſay a plain reference, but any diſtant alluſion to the Pſalmiſt's condi-

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tion and deportment which has been related. But I come to explain the verſes in their order:

VERSES 1. 2. & 3. *I will bleſs the Lord at all times: his praiſe ſhall continually be in my mouth. My ſoul ſhall make her boaſt in the Lord: the humble ſhall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!*—The ſatisfaction and pleaſure in the worſhip and adoration of the Supreme Being, which the Pſalmiſt had, and expreſſes in theſe verſes, is one of many proofs to be found in his ſacred compoſitions, that he made the acts of devotion his chief delight and joy. To him the honour of the moſt high was always *pleaſant*, and the celebration of his praiſe a *comely thing*. When he conſidered the daily and conſtant obligations he lay under to the God and father of all mercies extended to the children of men, and to the people of Iſrael in a peculiar manner, he found the ſentiments of devout and grateful acknowledgment to take a deep root in his ſoul, ſo that he could ſay, with ſincerity and truth, that the general diſpoſition of his heart, and its moſt ſteady and ardent deſire, *was to bleſs the Lord at all times, and to have the divine praiſe continually in his mouth.* That the Pſalmiſt poſſeſſed, by the ſpirit of grace given him, ſuch a pious frame of mind, the memorials of it that ſtand upon record, are, as they have been to many ages paſt, and will be to others yet to come, a moſt convincing teſtimony and demonſtration. They are penned in the ſincere and fervent language of the heart, which is inimitable by the hypocrite or diſſembler; whoſe affected piety, and feigned praiſe, are declared to be an abomination, puniſhable by the immediate vengeance of the Lord of heaven and earth. They are, indeed, ſuch a treaſure of rational and ſpiritual devotion offered to the deity, that the world may ſtill be aſked, where is its parallel to be found? Adapted as it was to the public religion and ſervice of God in an early age of his church, then placed in particular circumſtances, the juſt ſentiments communicated by it of his adorable perfections, have a luſtre that is

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not diminiſhed, but ſhines bright, even amidſt the more complete diſplay of them in the *evangelical* revelation.

In the addreſſes of prayer, praiſes, confeſſion of ſins, and thankſgiving unto God for all his mercies, the ſtyle and expreſſions uſed by the Pſalmiſt in all theſe points, have been, and are eſteemed in the Chriſtian church, as ever venerable and conſecrated patterns of public and private devotion. The verſes under our immediate conſideration are one example among many that may be given of the dignified and energetic language with which the Pſalmiſt was endowed, and enabled to utter becomingly the praiſes of the Moſt High God: Nor yet does the ſpecimens of his rich and copious vein upon this ſubject exceed propriety, ſo as to lead any, but the moſt ſtupid and ignorant, into a miſapprehenſion of his ſentiments: By ſuch only can the expreſſion of his having *the praiſe of God continually in his mouth*, be underſtood in a literal ſenſe. Uninterrupted devotion every conſiderate perſon knows to be incompatible with our ſtate in the world, and condition in the body; and that ſuch perfection is only attainable in the *higher houſe* above, where the choirs of ſaints and angels of God are ſaid to praiſe him *without wearineſs or intermiſſion of their heavenly and ever delightful employment and ſervice.* Yet *to pray always*, and *without ceaſing*, are expreſſions in the goſpel equivalent to thoſe employed by the Pſalmiſt; whence it is evident, that the phraſeology of both are to be taken in a like qualified and reſtricted ſenſe. Under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, *the morning and evening ſacrifices* preſcribed and daily performed in the temple, were always accompanied with the devout exerciſes of prayer and praiſe; the noon alſo being a *ſet* time for them. Hence an Iſraelite, who roſe to his devotion, as David did, at the *four night watches*, could ſay with him, that *ſeven times a-day* (reckoning it to conſiſt of 24 hours) *he praiſed God becauſe of his righteous judgments.* Pſalm cxix. 64. It appears that our Saviour, who is ſaid to have been daily in the temple, or as often as he was at Jeruſalem, gave his attendance, eſpecially at the appointed hours of public prayer. His

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apoſtles and diſciples, who followed his example, are ſaid, from the frequency of their reſort to the houſe of prayer, *to have been continually in it praiſing and bleſſing God.* Luke xxiv. 53. Thus we have reaſon to believe, and to truſt, that, although his moſt devoted ſervants cannot have God's praiſe conſtantly in their mouths, or, conſiſtently with other duties required of them, be always in the acts of holy duty, yet they ſhall, as having the love and ſervice of the deity ever prevalent in their hearts, be recorded by him as worthy to be numbered with, and joined to, the company of thoſe bleſſed ſpirits *who ſerve him night and day* in his high and holy temple of Heaven.

It is a piece of pious and moral diſcipline learned by the true ſervants of God, when they can ſay from the heart, with the Pſalmiſt, that, having renounced that ſelf-applauſe and vanity, commonly produced in human minds, upon occaſions of great proſperity, or remarkable eſcapes from dangers or troubles, they, if diſpoſed to think piouſly of ſuch events, aſcribe all the *glory of them to the Lord.* Beſides, that pride is *unbecoming* man, and more frequently is the attendant of a weak and defective mind than of an accompliſhed one, the fool being apter to boaſt of his qualifications than the wiſe man, it is to be obſerved, that all diſcoveries of an aſſuming and arrogant ſpirit, even where there may be ſome ſuperiority in knowledge or in virtue, prove offenſive and diſguſtful to others, and provoke a degree of envy, which otherwiſe would not be ſtirred up. It is, therefore, a juſt and ſalutary doctrine inculcated both in the Old and New Teſtament Revelation, that whatſoever eminent advantages ſome men poſſeſſed, whether in their outward circumſtances, in the conſtitution of their bodies, or the endowment of their minds, it became them not to be *lifted up above meaſure*, but to know themſelves, in their moſt improved condition, *to be but men.*

As their vanity was ſo groſs and impious as to make gods of human beings, it was highly requiſite that ſuch an inſult upon the honour of the deity, and the perfection of the worſhip due to him

alone, ſhould be condemned in the divine word, and alſo repreſſed and counteracted by the public inſtitutions and acts of religion. The ſolemnity and frequency of theſe, under the Moſaic law, were well calculated to this end and purpoſe. Standing memorials they were to the people of Iſrael, that the God whom they worſhipped was the *only one*, eternal and inviſible, and that, beſides him, there was no other in the heavens above or the earth below, to whom religious adoration and homage was to be paid. With reſpect to all appearances of human grandeur, by which worldly minds were ready to be intoxicated, and mean and ignorant ſouls hold in undue admiration, the ſcriptural admonitions, and eſpecially thoſe in the Pſalms againſt ſuch mental deluſions, are delivered in ſtrong and corrective terms. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciſe loving kindneſs upon the earth.* Jerem. ix. 23, & 24. The expreſſions uſed by the Pſalmiſt to communicate his conceptions of the adorable perfections of the Deity, are in a ſtyle correſpondent to theſe, and yet in more animated and ſublime language hold forth, that *all power, dominion, and majeſty, in heaven and in earth, belong unto him: Clouds and darkneſs are round about him; righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—He hath prepared it for judgment; he ruleth ever by his power: Let not the nations exalt themſelves. Although the Lord be high, yet hath he reſpect unto the lowly; but the proud he knows afar off.* Pſal. xcvii. 1, & 2.—ix. 7.—cxxviii. 6.

It appears to be the dictate of natural, as well as revealed religion, that the creature who owes being, life, and all the faculties he hath to the benignity of his Maker, can have no title to take glory to himſelf, on account of any works that are done by him, *whoſe goodneſs extendeth not unto God, nor can it be profitable unto the Almighty, as he that is wiſe may be ſo to himſelf.* It is, therefore, a ſacred maxim written up, and tranſmitted from generation to generation in the

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ſanctuary of God. *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*, and in his *almighty ſtrength*, and unlimited grace. In this way it is permitted to his ſervants to have a proper ſenſe of the dignity conferred upon them, when rendered, in any conſiderable reſpect, inſtrumental in promoting the honour and praiſe of his name upon earth. Nay, it is, in conſcience, a duty upon them to tell and publiſh abroad what God has done in a manner beyond that of his common providence, for their temporal ſafety, or their ſpiritual good. *Therefore*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *I have not hid thy righteouſneſs within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulneſs and thy ſalvation; I have not concealed thy loving kindneſs and thy truth from the congregation.* As in the ſtation he occupied in the tabernacle of God, it was the more indiſpenſibly required of him ſo to do; he conſidered likewiſe the ſpecial conſolation and joy it would afford to all the *humble*, the *meek*, and *lowly in ſpirit.* They, he knew, would believe his teſtimony, that the deliverance obtained by him was ſo wonderful, that no human means, or any power leſs than that which was divine, could have accompliſhed it for him. In the knowledge of ſuch an event, they were highly intereſted, and would ſincerely rejoice in it, as a pledge of the like almighty protection being exerciſed to them in a time of trouble and diſtreſs. "Since, then, ſays the Pſalmiſt, we hold God alone to be the author of all our mercies, and that particular acknowledgments are due for diſtinguiſhed acts of his grace to his people, let us join now, with one accord, in celebrating his praiſe, and extolling his bleſſed name; for I have it to atteſt, that, being beſet with many enemies, and pitched upon the brink of deſpair, *I ſought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*"

VERSES 5, 6, & 7. *They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not aſhamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and ſaved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth*

them.—In theſe verſes, the Pſalmiſt appears to paſs abruptly from the teſtimony he gave of his private experience of the mercy and grace of God, to that which the people of Iſrael in general, or all thoſe who worſhipped and feared him in an acceptable manner, had found to be likewiſe their lot and felicity. The quick tranſition he makes, without regarding the ſyntax, from the ſtatement of his own caſe to that of many others, may be accounted for from the freedom of the poetic ſtyle, which, in the Hebrew language, ſometimes admitted of a change of the perſons ſpoken of, in the ſame ſentence, from the ſingular to the plural number, when what was affirmed of the one or the other could, with equal propriety, be applied to both. Here, indeed, it may be ſaid, that we have only an inſtance of a tranſpoſed ſentence, by the *ſixth* being put before the *fifth*, which, where the ſenſe was not to be affected by it, might be done for the ſake of the more proper arrangement or harmonious cadence of the words or verſes.

In the expreſſions, *They looked unto him, and were lightened*, there ſeems to be an evident alluſion to the circumſtances of the Iſraelites while they were in Egypt, and alſo when they travelled, for a courſe of years, through the paths of the wilderneſs. In both theſe ſituations, as they were frequently in diſtreſs, it might be truly ſaid, that, whenever they looked to the viſible ſigns of God's preſence with them, and regarded them as aſſurances of his almighty and gracious protection, they felt the happy effects of this their faith. If their dejected countenances diſcovered fears for their ſafety, the dark cloud was ſoon removed by the infliction of ſome awful judgment upon their adverſaries. They were thus effectually convinced, that no people, who placed their hope and truſt in the Lord of heaven and earth, could be put to ſhame or confuſion on account of their confidence in his holy word and promiſes. *Many times*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *were they delivered* by him from their apprehenſions in this manner; ſo that we cannot confine the alluſion, ſtrictly, to particular inſtances of the divine interpoſition in their behalf; yet the

the figurative terms, in which it is expreſſed, may well be deemed to have a ſpecial reference to two remarkable paſſages in the ſacred hiſtory. The one records that terrible viſitation of Egypt, when God commanded a thick darkneſs to overſpread the whole land for three days. *They ſaw not one another*, it is ſaid, *neither aroſe any from his place, during that time; but all the children of Iſrael had light in their dwellings.* The other reſpects that viſible and miraculous ſign of God's immediate care, and conſtant watchfulneſs over them; when *the Lord*, or *he* who is alſo called *the angel of the covenant, went before them by day, in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them on the way; and by night, in a pillar of fire, to give them light.* Exodus, x. 22.; Ibid. xiii. 21.

The probability, that the Pſalmiſt had in his eye theſe, or other ſuch ſignals of the almighty arm of God being ſtretched out in defence and vindication of his people, from the aſſaults and perſecutions of their heathen enemies, is further ſupported by the repreſentation of his acting ſo, verſe 7. as an *encampment of the angel of the Lord* around their *tents*, or their being *encompaſſed* about with *the hoſt of God*, the angel of *his preſence*, being their leader. Hence it is recorded, Exod. xiv. 19. upon the children of Iſrael being brought to the tremenduous ſituation of having the Red Sea immediately before them, and Pharoah, with his mighty military hoſt, cloſe behind them, *that the angel of God, which went before the camp of Iſrael, removed, and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud being moved in the ſame direction, it ſtood between the two camps; the effect of which was, that it became a cloud of darkneſs to that of the Egyptians, but gave light by night to the camp of Iſrael.* Theſe remarks may point out the propriety of various other alluſions made by the Pſalmiſt, which were underſtood well in the congregations of Iſrael, but, not being ſo obvious to us, may appear ſtrained, or out of their place.

VERSES 8, 9, & 10. *O taſte and ſee that the Lord is good! bleſſed*

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is the man that truſteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his ſaints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and ſuffer hunger: but they that ſeek the Lord ſhall not want any good thing.—The Pſalmiſt had held forth, in the preceding verſes, the bleſſed and comfortable doctrine, that the *Deity*, the God of Iſrael, ever proved himſelf, by manifeſt and unqueſtionable teſtimonies, not only that he was the *ſafeguard* and *ſure defence* of the Iſraelites as a nation; but that, whenever any individual among them was thrown into uncommon and ſevere diſtreſs, his fervent prayer, put up in faith, was heard by him, and the word, ever powerful for deliverance, pronounced *from on high.* Here the Pſalmiſt breaks out into a moſt pious and redoubled ejaculation and intreaty; *O taſte and ſee that the Lord is Good! O fear him, ye his ſaints!* It was not enough that the humbled and the meek were called upon by David, now ſet free from the power of his enemies, to join their hearts praiſe, and that of their voices, with his, in extolling the name and grace of God, ſignaliſed as they were, with regard to his perſonal preſervation. However agreeable or edifying to their minds this might be, he wiſhed and prayed that more ſpiritual benefit than what they and he had experienced upon this occaſion, ſhould reſult from the public teſtimony they gave to the *goodneſs of the Deity.* "Let, ſays he, what is our comfort and joy be common to all who believe in the only living and true God. He is revealed to them, as well as to us, as a God eſſentially good in himſelf, and *whoſe tender mercies* to his creatures *are over all his other works.*" How conſpicuouſly is this divine attribute of benevolence teſtified, by its extenſion to numberleſs tribes of animated beings who feel its effects; and, while they are utterly incapable of knowing, or thinking, in the leaſt, how, or by what cauſe or power, they live and move, and have their exiſtence and preſervation; yet all of them are made, by an inviſible hand, to ſerve the purpoſes and end of their creation.

In man, as a part of the rational world, *there is a ſpirit found*; and, if at all conſiderate, he knows it to be *the inſpiration of the Almighty*;

mighty; who, equally poſſeſſed of all wiſdom, as of infinite power, has imparted to him the diſtinguiſhing, and here below, the ſingular gift of reaſon and underſtanding. He therefore *taſtes*, or is *made ſenſible* of the goodneſs of God, in another manner than what the brute creatures can poſſibly do. The food that nouriſhes his body, the raiment that clothes and warms it, he knows to be furniſhed from the ſtore-houſe of the divine bounty, without which they never could be found; nor have the qualities requiſite for theſe purpoſes, unleſs they were ſo prepared. The eye of his mind opens to this contemplation of the Deity as *the giver of all good;* and he *ſees* or *perceives* no leſs wiſe deſign and contrivance than mercy and grace in the diſtribution of it. The exhibition of both theſe neceſſarily connected perfections in the Divinity, proceeds upon a plan far too high or extenſive for the human mind to comprehend. But *bleſſed* is the *man*, who, from what he *feels* and *ſees* of the divine benignity, *truſts* with confidence in the rectitude, the unerring wiſdom, and boundleſs goodneſs of the whole, and every part of God's government over the children of men. His faith produces ſerenity of mind. The days he enjoys in the world ſhine brighter to him than to ungodly men. Every one of them is accounted the proof of a kind and merciful providence exerciſed toward him. The prayers and grateful acknowledgments he offers to the beſt of all Beings, cheriſh his ſoul with the hope, that he who is the God and guardian of his life here, will alſo prove the rock of his ſpiritual and everlaſting ſalvation.

" *Fear the Lord*, therefore, adds the Pſalmiſt, all ye who profeſs to be devoted to his ſervice, and count it your greateſt honour to be called *his ſaints.* Know the felicity of your condition, if indeed you have a title to this high character. You will be enabled to fulfil it, by having the fear of God prevalent in your hearts. *The fear of man* (as I and others have found) *bringeth a ſnare;* but whoſoever *putteth his truſt in the Lord ſhall be ſafe.*" His fear, duly conſidered, conſtitutes the ſafety and welfare of the human ſoul. It is a holy band

band that binds it to an awful reverence of and ſubmiſſion to the divine will, and a conſcientious ſenſe of the obligation of all his commandments. It is not a ſervile *chain* againſt which the ſervant of God ſtruggles, or hath the leaſt wiſh to be freed from, as hard or grievous to his ſpirit; on the contrary, he knows and embraces it, as the preſervative of his heart from worldly deluſions, or ſinful impreſſions. It excludes all other apprehenſions of evil or danger, but what ariſe from the dread of tranſgreſſing againſt the known rules of his duty to God and to man. Other anxieties and cares about the body, or his temporal life, he could freely commit to the common providence of God, had the divine word not aſſured him, that his rank, as a creature in the world, being in the eye of the Deity far ſuperior to that of the young raven, or the lion; and therefore his preſervation in life is made more the object of the divine attention and regard than that of theſe and other animal tribes. If they have fewer wants, they have alſo fewer means to ſupply them. Their meat is given them, in the general line of God's providence, beyond which there is no ſtretch made, no particular interpoſition for their ſafety, unleſs perhaps it be for ſome purpoſe more valuable than their lives. They may *lack their food*, and *ſuffer hunger*, without any help being afforded to them. The old of their kind thruſt from them, within a certain ſpace of time, the young they have produced, and know them no more. It is otherwiſe with the progeny of the human race, even in their moſt unciviliſed ſtate. Unleſs the parents be in particular circumſtances of diſtreſs, they are foſtered upon their breaſts, cheriſhed upon their knees, and have their food given them for a courſe of years. This affection, divinely wrought up in the hearts of the parents, is prolonged, according as their offſpring are obſerved to be ſtronger or weaker; nor is its force diminiſhed, but often more increaſed, to the feebleſt of them. If, then, the Supreme Being hath bound, by ſuch natural ties, the hearts of earthly parents to their children, ſhall he not regard thoſe with an eye of tenderneſs, who, at an early age, have learned to know him, and to ſeek him, as their

Father

Father in heaven. *As a father pitieth his children*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *ſo the Lord pities them that fear him*; for *he knoweth our frame, and remembers that we are duſt.* If, ſays our Saviour to earthly fathers, *ye know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy ſpirit to them that aſk him.* He is alike the all-wiſe and bountiful diſpenſer both of temporal and ſpiritual benefits; and he beſtows them in that mode and proportion which he knows to be beſt, and for the greateſt good of thoſe who receive them. If a portion of his ſpirit is imparted but in one of its graces, as in that of contentment with the meaſure of outward good aſſigned to any of his ſervants, behold what a bleſſing attends it. It is proved to ſuch a one, *that the little he hath is better*, or rendered more comfortable to him, *than the riches of many wicked. The Lord*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *knoweth the days of the upright*; not thoſe only of the ſhort life allotted to them in this world, *but that they have an inheritance which ſhall remain with them for ever.* The unſhaken faith they have in this future and everlaſting ſtate of felicity, warranted to them as it is by the immutable word of the Deity, upholds them in every calamity; ſo *that in the evil time they ſhall not be aſhamed of the truſt* repoſed in it; and *in the days of famine they ſhall be ſatisfied.* Pſalm xxxvii. 16, 17, 18, & 19.

VERSES 11, 12, 13, & 14. *Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking guile. Depart from ill, and do good; ſeek peace, and purſue it.*—It is delightful and inſtructive to obſerve how communicative of good to others the principles of true religion and piety render the human ſoul. They operate in direct contradiction to that natural ſelfiſhneſs prevalent among ungodly and worldly men. Whatever talents are given them they conſider as appropriated to themſelves alone, and to be turned to their own private advantage. So the avaricious man hugs his treaſure; and

even, when he enjoys but a ſmall part of it, he heaps it up. The ſenſualiſt would devour all pleaſures; and, were it not for the ſurfeit of them that he feels, would hardly allow others their ſhare in them. The wiſe man, in a worldly ſenſe, thinks it enough *to be wiſe for himſelf*, and would engroſs all knowledge, or at leaſt ſuch a degree of it, that others may appear as fools, or of weak underſtanding, in compariſon with him. The Pſalmiſt teſtifies here, how much elevated his mind was above the contagion of this ignominious affection, and that the religion and ſervice of God had taught him a more excellent and divine leſſon. With the openneſs and candour of a liberal heart, he invites all thoſe who were younger than he, and had leſs underſtanding of the neceſſity or efficacy of the principles and precepts of religion in human life, to come and hear his inſtruction upon theſe points. As he delivered them in *the fear* of the God of Iſrael, ſo they were to be received by them. It is an important truth, worthy of your moſt ſerious attention, ſays the Pſalmiſt, to know, that if no more was propoſed, or conſidered to be the end of human life, than how it may be ſtretched out to a more than common length of days, and theſe filled up with the utmoſt ſhare of temporal good; yet, even in this defective, miſtaken, and falſe view of it, the precepts of religion cannot be altogether diſpenſed with, but muſt be obtemperated in a certain degree. Acquit himſelf from ſome conformity to them no man can, without miſſing of his aim, and finding his life fraught with far more evil than good. But, as you may not be eaſily perſuaded of this truth, while your youthful minds preſent nothing but what is pleaſant and flattering in the ſcene of life that is before you, take the following maxims as a general rule. They are no more, indeed, than what maturity of reaſon and cool judgment of the ſtate of human nature may preſcribe; but, if obſerved, muſt lead on to a deeper ſenſe of religion and godly fear, as *profitable both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking guile. Depart from ill, and do good; ſeek peace,*

and

and purſue it. Why the reſtraint of ſpeech, or the government of the tongue, ſhould be put foremoſt in this ſhort *directory* for proper conduct in life and behaviour, may be underſtood from particular reaſons, and alſo from ſuch as are of more weight and general concern. The precepts are addreſſed to the young, or riſing generation; in whom, as modeſty in itſelf, was laudable; ſo it became them, for their improvement in knowledge, to be *ſwift to hear, and ſlow to ſpeak.* It was the more requiſite to give them this counſel, that they might avoid being early entangled in the *iniquity of the times*; which being thoſe of violent party ſpirit and faction, encouraged intemperance of ſpeech, retorted invective and outrageous ſlander among all ranks of men. But, if there had been no ſuch turbulence in Iſrael, the admonition to keep a guard upon the tongue, was a moſt intereſting one, and ſuitable to every ſtate of ſociety, however compoſed to peace it might be. How eaſily and often, from the aptitude of mankind to let looſe their tongues, and, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, to uſe opprobrious or *all devouring words* to one another upon the ſlighteſt occaſions, the fire of diſcord would be raiſed, has been inſiſted upon in the explication of the 2d and 3d verſes of the 15th Pſalm, and need not here be repeated. It may only be obſerved, that, when the Pſalmiſt calls the tongue *his glory, and that of man*, he marks the honourable office and uſe for which it was deſigned, eſpecially in expreſſing devoutly the praiſes of God; and, by this faculty it hath of uttering, in articulate and intelligible words, the thoughts of the mind, or ſentiments of the heart, it engages, in a peculiar manner, the fellowſhip and fond affection of *man to man*; whence reſults a pleaſure and delight, ſuperior to any other of the natural kind to be found in human life. But to what pernicious and deplorable conſequences in ſociety the unbridled and licentious tongue of the fooliſh, the wicked or deceitful man draws, may be read in the pointed and pathetic deſcription given of them by the Apoſtle James. Gen. Epiſt. iii. 2,—12; iv. 11.

The next counſel offered by the Pſalmiſt to the diſciple, ſtudious

of attaining the greateſt temporal good in this life, is to depart *from evil, and to do good.* It ſuppoſes, that by the diſcriminating line which the moral law of God had drawn between virtue and vice, conformity to it, or tranſgreſſion, was ſo far known to him, that he could not, from blindneſs of mind, think, or *call evil good, and good evil.* If, in an abſtract and theoretical view, he did not clearly perceive the diſtinction, it was marked to him in characters that could not be miſtaken, or eſcape his obſervation, from the viſible and momentous difference in their effects, both upon the bodies and ſouls of men. As the evil ariſing from ſin is ſooner and more ſenſibly perceived by many, than the excellence and benefit of religion and virtue, the Pſalmiſt's diſciple is exhorted not to incur danger by any dalliance with the former, but to depart from it ſpeedily, and with the firm reſolution never to be entangled in its ſnares. He will then prove, to his happy experience, that he *has made the firſt ſtep to virtue, by flying from vice.* It will encourage and enable him to try the ways of wiſdom, and taſte what pleaſure and comfort they bring to the human mind. The true value and efficacy of every principle or affection in it, are only known from its exerciſe. To be diſpoſed to virtue, and hold it high in the eſtimation of our minds, is not ſufficient. To be thoroughly ſenſible of its charms, and demonſtrate their power over us, we muſt proceed to the *acts* and practice of *goodneſs;* and be converſant in *doing juſtice, performing works of mercy, aud walking humbly before God.*

The laſt injunction, here preſcribed by the Pſalmiſt, is to *ſeek peace, and purſue it;* than which there is hardly a maxim, of a moral and prudential kind, that tends to promote more generally and effectually the outward good and welfare of private or public ſocieties of men. But in vain will any individual or ſet of men imagine that ſuch a bleſſing can be accompliſhed by their endeavours, unleſs they be themſelves endowed with the *ſpirit of peace.* They muſt find it at home, and in their own breaſts; and the motives to *ſeek it, and purſue it,* muſt be not thoſe of worldly policy,

or

or mean and ſiniſter views of advantage to themſelves; but to come from a ſincere deſire and love of peace, which, when God commands it, for families or nations, is juſtly accounted one of the moſt precious temporal mercies. Among the wicked and ungodly, the earthly minded and ambitious, the violent and unjuſt, there can be no peace, except what is deceitful, precarious, and of ſhort duration. The breaches of peace, the *wars*, and *rumours of wars*, *whence come they* abroad upon the earth, ſaith the Scripture, *but from the evil and corrupt luſts and paſſions that dwell in the hearts of men.* The controuling power of God over them is ſeen, when, by ſome awful and afflicting viſitation, as that of famine or peſtilence, he *waſtes or ſcatters thoſe who delight in war*, or, in juſt judgment, renders ſuch nations *ſcourges to one another.* In the moral, as well as in the natural world of God, every action or event is brought under a general ſyſtem. As in the one, ſo in the other, nothing is left looſe to chance, or an unconnected and caſual operation. *The work of righteouſneſs*, ſays the Prophet, is, in the reſult, *certain peace*; and *the effect* of it, *quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.* It is not in the intermediate ſteps of Providence, as apparent to us, always productive of this deſirable end. For ſpecial good reaſons, it may be otherwiſe appointed for a time. The beſt diſpoſed to act upon the principles of juſtice and mercy towards others around them, may, and often do, find it impracticable to purchaſe peace, by any conceſſions, at the hands of outrageous and inſolent men. From experience of this, the Pſalmiſt pours out his mournful complaint, Pſalm cxx. *Wo is me, that I ſojourn in Meſech; that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My ſoul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace; but, when I ſpeak, they are for war.* But the improvement of the doctrines and ſentiments unfolded ſo much at length in the comment upon this Pſalm, may be collected from the following ſhort lecture, from verſe 17th to the end of the Pſalm.

LECTURE

LECTURE XI.

PSALM XXXIV. Continued.

VERSE 17.—*The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*

AFFLICTION, however ſad and grievous, has its ſpiritual advantage, and its moral end, under the government of God. He permits the righteous and innocent to be often viſited with it, ſo that their cry is heard; that cry of diſtreſs which in them proceeds from no fretfulneſs of ſpirit at his diſpenſations, but from the feeling of calamity natural to all men. Such is the force of that ſympathy, which God has wrought into our frame, that the cry of diſtreſſed innocence ſometimes reaches the heart of the inſenſible, and makes even the unmerciful to melt with pity. The eye of compaſſion is given to thoſe who never felt for another's ſorrow before. The unrelenting are moved, and the hardened in heart are affected with tenderneſs. This is a ſingular and beneficial operation, which God accompliſhes by means of the grief of his ſervants, and, without it, the feelings of humanity would be little known, and exerciſed among men: At the ſame time, the piety of his people is promoted by it. They are required to direct their prayer in the day of trouble to the God of their lives, the ſupreme ruler and diſpoſer of all events; while the children of pride ſummon up their paſſions, or call their earthly confidents to their aid, they know that ſalvation only cometh from the Lord, and to him only their cry is made to aſcend. And how happy and bleſſed is the effect of this recourſe by faithful prayer unto him. He

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is ſaid by the Pſalmiſt *to hear them, and to deliver them out of all their troubles.* Not only does he afford the ſuccour neceſſary for their preſent diſtreſs, but he commands a redemption for them, which ſets them above all the power of their ſpiritual enemies. We are not to underſtand the expreſſion of the Pſalmiſt here, as if a total exemption from outward trouble was ever the lot of any in this life: Such deliverance is only competent to that which will be hereafter. But the people of God are either enabled, by the divine favour and grace, to ſupport patiently the troubles ſent to them, or to expect the termination of them promiſed to all thoſe who put their truſt in his mercy; and who are aſſured from his word, that he will be their God and guide, and deliver them from death and the grave.

VERSE 18. *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and ſaveth ſuch as be of a contrite ſpirit.*—In theſe words, the Pſalmiſt deſcribes the temper of mind found in thoſe who are properly exerciſed with trouble. They are often called in Scripture the humble and contrite ones, in oppoſition to the proud, the arrogant, and the vain. As nothing carries men farther from a ſenſe of God and their duty, than the latter diſpoſition, the oppoſite one of humility, and a conſcientious ſenſibility and penitence, either upon account of negligence in duty, or of the ſins and offences we have committed, is declared to be moſt becoming our condition, and acceptable in the ſight of God. *The ſacrifice of a broken and contrite heart*, it is ſaid, *he will not deſpiſe.* Whether, therefore, we ſuffer according to the will of God, or have cauſe to confeſs our treſpaſſes unto him, it muſt be done with a humble and penitent heart. If ſo affected, we ſhall find, to our happy experience, *that God is nigh to us*, that is, he will afford that ready ſupport and relief which is ſuitable to our condition. Though wordly men may deride the dejected in ſpirit, nay, pour contempt and ſcorn upon all ſuch, it is ſaid of God, that he will not overlook the *afflictions of the afflicted; but that he counts their tears, and numbers their ſorrows.* The Pſalmiſt expreſſes this

this in the glow of poetical language, when he ſays, Pſalm cxlvii. *The Lord doth build up Jeruſalem: he gathereth the outcaſts of Iſrael: he healeth the broken in heart; and he bindeth up their wounds.* The Prophet Iſaiah, to the ſame purpoſe, repreſents the Deity as eying, from his throne in heaven, with peculiar tenderneſs, the humble and afflicted, chap. lxvi. *The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot-ſtool: where is the houſe that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my reſt? For all thoſe things hath mine hand made, and all thoſe things have been, ſaith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite ſpirit.* How different then is this becoming ſenſe of God, ſuch as his word communicates, from that gloomy and diſmal deſpondency into which ſome weak minds fall, and call it the work of religion! How do they forget its cleareſt admonitions! *Acquaint thyſelf with God, and be at peace, ſo good ſhall come unto thee.*

VERSE 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*—When we conſider the various and manifold ſcenes of trouble in which the righteous are engaged; when we ſee them ſurrounded with them, and perplexed on every ſide; we may raſhly infer that they cannot eſcape, or be extricated from them. But this is our infirmity, ariſing generally from narrow views of the divine providence, or our impatience. So far from being any juſt arraignment of the divine wiſdom, or a challenge upon his power or goodneſs, both theſe are ſeen more marvellouſly diſplayed in the deliverance of his people. What others thought impoſſible to be done, what they themſelves ſcarcely hoped for, has been performed in a manner far ſurpaſſing all human conceptions; ſo that the iſſue of things rendered it manifeſt that the hand of God was there interpoſed. If the Deity, in this life, is ſeen to illuſtrate his glorious perfections, by bringing order out of confuſion; If, *in ſix*, yea, *in ſeven troubles*, he ſuffers not his ſervants to be overwhelmed, but works a marvellous redemption for them; How great will

will that final ſalvation be, when he ſhall call forth his people from their probationary ſtate, and redeem his Iſrael out of all their troubles. We behold the divine adminiſtration in the natural world promoted by contrarieties, or what appear to us to be ſuch. We cannot ſay, then, but that it may be ſo in the moral world; and that a ſtate of ſuffering will be preparatory, and conducive to a ſtate of felicity. The word of God aſſures his people that this is the caſe; and that *the light afflictions, which are but for a moment, ſhall work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* The Pſalmiſt, by ſubjoining here, *he keepeth all the bones of the righteous man*, alludes to the glorious redemption which God will accompliſh for his people, when he ſhall raiſe their bodies out of the duſt. Then it will appear, *that he hath kept all their bones*, ſo that none of them ſhall be found wanting. If, among men, the remains of thoſe who are dear to them are preſerved with a ſort of pious care, and even treated with honour, we may believe that more ſignal and laſting honours are appointed for the bodies of thoſe who die in the Lord. They ſhall have part in the reſurrection of the faithful and the juſt; when, as the Scripture aſſures us, *the graves ſhall give up their dead, to die no more*, but to be rendered incorruptible, and become like the angels of God.

VERSE 21. *Evil ſhall ſlay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous ſhall be deſolate.*—But if due honours wait on the righteous, both in life and in death, the Pſalmiſt declares here the oppoſite fate of the wicked. *Evil*, ſays he, *ſhall ſlay them.* The great law which God hath appointed to take place in the moral world, is ſtrongly expreſſed in theſe words. God hath ſo connected the welfare of man, his ſafety and happineſs, with a life of faith and obedience, that they are ever found inſeparable from it. A degree of miſery is, in like manner, annexed to ſin and diſobedience; ſo that *deſtruction waits on the way of the wicked;* it follows him cloſe; till, *having filled up the meaſure of his iniquity*, he is *pierced through with*

many darts, and falls the miſerable victim of the evil he hath done. How many, alas! are yet found to chuſe this way of deſtruction, that *leads down to the chambers of death.* How many lie ſlain and wounded in it; and yet againſt whom ſhall theſe wicked men complain, when they are only made to eat the *fruit of their own ways*, and to be filled *with their own devices*; when they have deſpiſed all counſel, and would not turn at any reproof? Their hatred of the righteous, the Pſalmiſt intimates, ſhall, in the juſt judgment of God, aggravate their guilt, and bring them to a more ſpeedy and ſudden cataſtrophe. As they would have quenched the heavenly flame of virtue, which God has kindled up in the hearts of his ſervants, and robbed the world of its faireſt luſtre, which is ſeen in the lives of the righteous and the good, their *lamp ſhall be put out*, as odious to God, and pernicious to mankind, *in utter darkneſs.* Forlorn and forſaken by all, they ſhall grope for the way and ſhall not find it. But a guilty conſcience will tell them that their doom and place of abode are fixed; far from the righteous, whom they ſhall no more annoy; far from ſpiritual felicity, which they cannot taſte, in the place of torments, which are already begun in their ſouls, and will be everlaſting.

VERSE 22. *The Lord redeemeth the ſoul of his ſervants; and none of them that truſt in him ſhall be deſolate.*—But otherwiſe it ſhall fare with the truly good, with thoſe to whom the title of the ſervants of God truly belongs; that name which denotes their relation to that Lord of heaven and earth, whoſe ſervice dignifies and exalts the ſouls of all ſuch as are engaged in it, ſhall avail for their redemption from the fear of death or the grave. To the body of ſin and corruption they ſhall be no longer ſubjected. In it they have ſerved the time appointed by their Lord, and have proved themſelves faithful. The Meſſenger of the covenant, the Redeemer of Iſrael, in whom they truſted, ſhall count them *among his ranſomed ones*; for whom he has purchaſed not only a deliverance from all their ſpiritual enemies,

but

but *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven* for them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, have endured to the end of their lives.

LECTURE XII.

PSALM XXXVI.

IT is difficult, and ſometimes a preſumptuous undertaking, to judge of mens hearts, and determine upon the ſecret ſentiments of their minds. But the ſacred Scriptures gives one rule, with reſpect to this, which muſt be owned to be the ſureſt and beſt of any. *By their deeds*, ſaid our Lord, *ye ſhall know them.* So ſays the Pſalmiſt here,

VERSE 1. *The tranſgreſſion of the wicked ſaith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*—Although never ſo reſerved, moderate, or charitable in judgment one may be; yet wicked actions muſt be concluded to ariſe from want of a religious principle. *They ſay within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* They produce a ſtrong and irreſiſtible conviction in me that God is not feared as he ought to be by ſuch men. Notwithſtanding they uſe his name, and make a ſhew of devotion to him; he is neither regarded as their Lord or their lawgiver. He is in effect, as to them, ſet aſide from the throne of his moral government; and it may be queſtioned whether the open denial of him be more injurious to his honour, than this renouncing of his fear, the ſenſe of his moral perfections, and the obligations of his laws. To ſuch he ſays in his

word, *If I am a father where is my honour, and if I am a maſter where is my fear.*

VERSE 2. *For he flattereth himſelf in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.*—There is ſuch a thing in human nature, it appears, as men reconciling themſelves to the moſt palpable contradictions, and thinking they may join together religion and profanity, a general belief and acknowledgment of God, and a reprobate mind. But although they may deceive themſelves and others for a time, their iniquity, *that is*, the evil bias of their minds, will be diſcovered; and their vicious actions teſtify the depravity of their hearts. There is a degree of ſin and vice which the world, not very ſcrupulous, will bear or overlook. But, when it runs on to a certain pitch, or an extremity, the world, degenerate as it is, will hardly endure it; for God has annexed ſuch conſequences to impiety and profligacy, as makes men, whether they will or not, confeſs them to be hateful. Although, therefore, men may either palliate ſin, ſo as to hide its odious colours from themſelves; though they may ſport with it, and prevail on others to do the ſame; yet this deluſion will only laſt for a ſeaſon. The evil and diſorder that God has ordained to be the attendant of all ſin, will ſoon enſue, and then the vicious character will incur hatred and deteſtation from all the good and virtuous.

VERSE 3. *The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wiſe, and to do good.*—Known ſin and vice would hardly be tolerated for any time, were it not for the diſſimulation practiſed by the ungodly, who ſtudy to impoſe a falſe character of themſelves upon others; and, ſucceeding in their hypocriſy, they are miſtaken for quite different perſons from what they really are. They appear to many to be ſaints, when they are the greateſt ſinners. But it is difficult always to keep on the maſk, and perform the hypocrite's part. It is dropped either unwarily, or boldly thrown

thrown aſide. Men then ſee into their real character; and find that they are actuated by no principle either of true wiſdom or goodneſs. When ungodly men proceed to this daring length in ſin, they are juſtly ſaid to *leave off to be wiſe*. Calm conſideration, or any cool review of their actions, becomes painful; and they endeavour to ſuppreſs it altogether. They are then content to act as irrational creatures, and to go on in life without a plan, or any rule of their conduct. The wiſdom which God has rendered neceſſary for the due conduct of life, is not a dark ſcience or an abſtruſe ſpeculation. It conſiſts more in the exertions of the heart than of the head. But where this beſt wiſdom is rejected or diſregarded, every good thought and purpoſe of the heart is extinguiſhed with it.

VERSE 4. *He deviſeth miſchief upon his bed: he ſetteth himſelf in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.*—The Pſalmiſt, in theſe words, concludes the character he had drawn, in which there is an alluſion to Saul's behaviour to him. After weeping, after teſtifying his ſorrow for what he had done againſt him, and declaring his purpoſe to change his behaviour, his relapſe is here intimated in emphatic terms. The gloomy and dark ſpirit ſeized him when he returned to his court. It haunted him when retired to his bed and the repoſe of night. The thoughts of revenge awaked afreſh, and baniſhed all reſt and compoſure. Now he thought of hunting David like a partridge in the wilderneſs. Now he laid a new ſcheme, that appeared infallible, for his deſtruction. Why repoſed not the King of Iſrael on his pillow? and why did ſleep, given to the meaneſt of his ſervants, fly from him? Oh reſentment, thou bane of human peace, this was thy operation! How many breaſts have been torn by thee! How many daggers haſt thou planted in the ſoul! How many wakening nights and reſtleſs days haſt thou given to thy votaries! This is an image of the evil of every violent and indulged paſſion. It robs the ſoul of all quiet. It becomes a tormenting fiend, that drives the ſoul before it, in a way that *is not good;*

good; but, being dark and diſmal, leads *down to the chambers of death.*

VERSES 5, & 6. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulneſs reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteouſneſs is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great heap: O Lord, thou preſerveſt man and beaſt.*—Here the Pſalmiſt abruptly turns away his thoughts from the ſubject he was upon, as affording only diſagreeable reflections, to another more pleaſant and comfortable to his ſoul and mind; which was that of contemplating the divine benignity and faithfulneſs, which he celebrates in many other paſſages, and almoſt in the very ſame words, as you find them, Pſalm lvii. 10. and cviii. 4.—As if he had ſaid, "If benevolence, mercy, and truth were to be baniſhed from among men, or angels, thoſe divine attributes will ever be found with Thee; and that in a ſuperiority and extent as much beyond whatever can be found in the breaſts of human creatures, as the heavens are above the earth, and ſurpaſs it in ſplendour and magnitude." Some ingenious commentators underſtand the expreſſion of *God's faithfulneſs reaching to the clouds*, as alluding to the beautiful and luminous bow which was formed in the clouds after the deluge, and hung forth, from time to time, as a ſign and memorial of God's gracious declaration, *that the waters ſhould not return to overflow the earth any more.* But if this figure of God's covenant of mercy and grace to mankind was admired; how much more ought we to venerate the confirmation of that covenant, by the appearance of the *ſun of righteouſneſs* in our dark world, in the perſon of the Saviour, who came, although in the humility of our nature, adorned with all the rays of heavenly grace, *to proclaim mercy, and peace, and good will to men.* To the praiſe and celebration of God's mercy and faithfulneſs, the Pſalmiſt ſubjoins, verſe 6th, that of his perfect righteouſneſs and adorable judgments. The one he compares to the great mountains, or, as it may be tranſlated literally, according to the Hebrew idiom, to the mountains of God, which he,

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as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, Pſalm lxv. 6. *being girded with power*, has ſet faſt upon their ſolid, rocky, and durable baſes; ſo that they ſtand unmoved by the land tempeſts, or the ſwelling waves of the ſea. But here the ſublime compariſon falls ſhort of an adequate repreſentation of the righteouſneſs of the Supreme Being, that is eternal and unchangeable; whereas the firmeſt mountains may be, and have been, ſhaken to their foundations, which, being but of earth, are therefore liable to de diſſolved. At the frown of their Maker, ſays the Pſalmiſt, civ. 32. *When he looketh upon the earth, it trembles; when he toucheth the hills, they ſmoke.* But the righteouſneſs of God, as eſſential to his divine nature, admits not of the leaſt change. What he hath done, or declared from the beginning of time, and in the progreſs of it, has been, and is, always the ſame, and held by him to be that which is ever juſt and right. He varies not the decrees or laws of his all-wiſe and holy government over angels or men, as is done in the beſt of human inſtitutions; ſo that to the rational creation of God thoſe eternal laws are made known by the ſanctions annexed to them. Evil and miſery await upon ſin, according to the meaſures and degrees of it: Happineſs and good follow the practice of righteouſneſs in the ſame courſe. No art or device of man, nor the power of all the potentates on earth, can alter or turn aſide theſe ſanctions, by which the Supreme Lord of Heaven and earth manifeſts his immutable and everlaſting righteouſneſs. How much, then, do the vicious and ungodly deceive themſelves, if they imagine (as they are apt to do) that, in a future ſtate, they ſhall find ſome abatement made in the righteous government of God, ſome more lenity ſhown to ſin and tranſgreſſion, than what he has ſignified in his word, and teſtified to be the rule of his adminiſtration in this world. Without recourſe to his covenant of grace, without repentance unto life, they can entertain no hope in his mercy. This way of ſalvation is indeed open to them; but there is no other to be expected. *The ſinner muſt forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts*, in order to obtain mercy and grace with the Moſt High.

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The next contemplation to which the Pſalmiſt turns his thoughts here, is that of the divine judgments, as they are exerciſed in this world towards particular nations, communities, or kindreds of men, and of which he obſerves, that *they are a great deep.* Although the general laws of the divine government are, as has been ſaid, plainly diſcovered unto men, it does not, therefore, follow, that the ſpecial acts of his providence and his particular diſpenſations in this world, whether they be thoſe of proſperity or adverſity, of mercy or of judgment, ſhould be, or can be, laid open to them in ſuch a manner that they may clearly ſee and underſtand all the grounds and reaſons of them. To imagine and contend that this ſhould be the caſe, is the preſumptuous and groſsly abſurd thought of the atheiſtical and impious, of thoſe who ſuppoſe that creatures, ſuch as we are, or even the moſt enlightened of them in heaven, ſhould ſee through all things with the *eye of omniſcience.* Unleſs men or angels think that they ſhould be, or can be, made as knowing and inteiligent as the all-wiſe God, there muſt be to them a depth in his counſels which they cannot fathom. If the book of his determinations were to be laid before them, none of them, nor all of them together, have light of mind, or underſtanding, ſufficient to peruſe the immeaſurable lines of them. It is not, therefore, to be conſidered as a reſerved or an arbitrary proceeding on the part of the Deity, that his providential diſpenſations, as extended to every caſe, are not fully unfolded unto men. Such a communication is, in the nature of things, an impoſſibility, unleſs heaven and earth were to be confounded together, and the creature man ſuppoſed to rival the wiſdom of his Maker, which is infinite. It is demonſtrable, therefore, how abſolutely requiſite and indiſpenſible, in our preſent ſtate of being, a principle of faith is in natural as well as in revealed religion. Here, as *we ſee but in part, and know but in part,* we muſt own and confeſs, that we are far from being judges of all the ways and works of God, whether they be thoſe of the natural world, or of his kingdom of grace. But it is fit, where our underſtanding halts, that we ſhould believe,

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and be perſuaded, that they are all ordered in wiſdom and in righteouſneſs. Hereafter, in the heavenly ſtate, we ſhall be made to ſee ſo clearly in the light of God's preſence, that all obſcurity ſhall be removed from the dark paſſages, and the divine procedure in them be juſtified, as no leſs wiſe, no leſs holy and righteous, than in thoſe which are moſt manifeſt. In the mean time, through the courſe of our lives on earth, let us adopt the language and ſentiments of the Pſalmiſt, xcvii. *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of iſles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkneſs are round about him; righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* And upon the wonderful work of our redemption, let us join with the Apoſtle, in his comment upon it, *O the height and the depth, the breadth and length of the love of God in Chriſt: It paſſeth all underſtanding and knowledge.*

LECTURE XIII.

PSALM XXXVI. Continued.

VERSE 7. *How excellent is thy loving kindneſs, O God? therefore the children of men put their truſt under the ſhadow of thy wings.*

OF all perfections of the divine nature, the Deity's tender regard and love to his creatures is the moſt captivating and delightful. It attracts the human ſoul by a powerful charm, and commands the utmoſt veneration and gratitude of which intelligent and reflecting men are capable. *How excellent is thy loving kindneſs,* ſays the Pſalmiſt: It has ſuch an excellency and pre-eminence as

cannot be fully declared, whether we conſider it in its nature, in its extent, or in its beneficial effects. Every act of favour and goodneſs in the Deity flows from pure grace and love, and marks condeſcending mercy on his part. *When I conſider thy heavens, the work of thy hands; then ſay I, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him.* So exceſſent is this loving kindneſs of God, as to extend to that immenſe variety of creatures with which the world is ſtored. The different orders of them partake of his bounty, and according to their capacity. The food he provides for them is ſuited to their natures, and given in due ſeaſon: But his tender mercies to the children of men are peculiarly to be admired. They, as creatures capable of higher and nobler enjoyments than thoſe of the body, are made to taſte of them in a more exalted manner. Convinced of his adorable perfections, they find his natural and moral government over them a refuge againſt all fears and apprehenſions that can annoy them. *They put their truſt under the ſhadow of his wings;* a beautiful and ſtriking metaphor, which the Pſalmiſt uſes to expreſs the fatherly care which God exerciſes over man, as reſembling that obſervable in parents to their tender brood. His providence is that wing which ſhelters them. His word and promiſes are the kind cheriſhing they receive; ſo that in him do they repoſe a full and entire confidence at all times.

VERSE 8. *They ſhall be abundantly ſatisfied with the fatneſs of thy houſe: and thou ſhalt make them drink of the river of thy pleaſures.*— The chief proviſion God has made to his people in this world, is found in the ſpiritual houſe or ſanctuary he has eſtabliſhed for them. In the Zion, called by his name, in his holy temple, he has made his *grace and his ſalvation to be known.* Here they receive not only a competent but a rich ſupply for all their ſpiritual wants; an entertainment of a nature and kind ſuperior to all other gratifications. *O taſte and ſee,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *that God is good; for there is no want to them that fear him.* Nay, they experience an overflow of pleaſure and delight, when

when they contemplate the riches both of his wiſdom and mercy, wherewith he has abounded to them in his holy covenant of grace by the Redeemer. In conſidering the effects of his love to the ſouls of men, in receiving the tokens of his free grace, they are refreſhed, like the thirſty when they drink of the cool ſpring, or limpid ſtream. They anticipate thoſe more exuberant and raviſhing draughts of pleaſure, which are to be found at God's right hand for evermore.

VERSE 9. *For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light ſhall we ſee light.*—All other ſources of ſatisfaction and comfort to which men may betake themſelves, will be found ſhallow or empty ciſterns. They are generally inſipid, and often bitter, and productive of diſguſt. But *with thee is the fountain of life*, that is, of all true, natural, moral, and ſpiritual enjoyments. Even the animal comforts of life receive their reliſh, by being known as thy gifts. The common air men breathe is ſweeter and more enlivening, when regarded as the mild and vital balm every moment flowing from Heaven. The morning light, and the ſun's rays, are more gladdening, when known to be ſent by *thee*. Without this conception of them, their beams are faint, and ſhorn of half their beauty: But *thou*, O father of mercies! art alſo the fountain of ſpiritual life. Therefore, ſays the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxiii. *O God, thou art my God, early will I ſeek thee, for thy loving kindneſs is better than life.* By the light of the divine word communicated from on high, men are convinced that God's teſtimonies are pure and excellent, and his law is the truth; and that to thoſe who obſerve and conform to them, they become a *Tree of life*; every noble faculty of the ſoul being excited, and every ſalutary affection called forth in proper exerciſe. Dark prejudices being removed, and hurtful deſires repreſſed, the ſoul awakes both to a clear perception of, and a ſteady adherence to, the ways and commandments of the living God. Eying his moral perfections, they grow in the love and admiration of them, and, adoring them daily, find ſtrength to imitate them. The diſcovery of

them is not made, or the love of them excited in vain. Behold, the purpoſe of heaven is accompliſhed by the ſpirit of grace working its effects, in all ſincere and faithful ſouls; who find, to their happy experience, *that the Lord God is a ſun and ſhield, and will give grace and glory; and no good thing will be with-hold from them who walk in righteouſneſs before him.* Therefore, it is not in hope only, but with a degree of faith and truſt, that the Pſalmiſt puts up a prayer in the 10th verſe, *That the Moſt High would continue his loving kindneſs unto them that know him, and his righteouſneſs to the upright in heart;* and, as if he had got an immediate anſwer to his petition, concludes, that the enmity of the impious and ungodly, againſt the righteous and the good, would be turned aſide, and finally baffled by their overthrow. With equal, and, I may ſay, with more aſſurance, may we, under the goſpel promiſes, truſt, that, if not our temporal adverſaries, at leaſt our ſpiritual ones, which are by far the moſt formidable, ſhall be ſubdued under us; if we yield not to them, but fight the good fight of faith under the banner of the Redeemer, the great Captain of our ſalvation, who having perſonally triumphed over them, will make us ſharers in his victory over ſin, and death, and hell. Therefore, he ſays to every believer, *Fear not, for I am with thee:* Be ye, then, of good courage, perſiſt in the ways of piety and righteouſneſs, *and he ſhall ſtrengthen your hearts.* He will not ſee any of you fall but with your own conſent. Even in the hour of temptation he will be nigh to ſave, if you ſay from the heart, *Lord, be thou my deliverer.*

In the laſt verſe, the Pſalmiſt ſees, as it were, in holy viſion, upon the mount of God, the final and everlaſting deſtruction of the workers of iniquity; *ſo that they ſhould be able to riſe no more.* That cataſtrophe of the obſtinately wicked and ungodly is to be looked for at the awful period, when God ſhall come forth in righteous judgment, and kindle the fire of his indignation upon the earth; to conſume or aſſign over to enduring flames, all thoſe who have renounced the knowledge of him, and proved themſelves rebels to his holy government

vernment and righteous laws: Yet it is the declaration of the divine Being in his word, *As I live, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they ſhould repent, turn unto me, and live.* It is, as it were with regret, and only from the abſolute neceſſity of maintaining his holy, juſt, and wiſe adminiſtration over all his rational creatures, that the ſentence of condemnation is paſt, and muſt be executed upon the impious. They are intreated and implored to avoid their dreadful fate, and fly to the refuge provided againſt *the wrath to come. Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die, O ye tranſgreſſors!* They are tolerated for a time; nay, they are made the objects of God's providential mercies, who makes his ſun to ſhine, and his rain to fall, on the juſt and unjuſt; but ſurely we muſt ſay, as even ſome wiſe and virtuous amongſt the heathen nations concluded, that they *are reſerved for a day of evil.* The Pſalmiſt, conſidering them not only as his and Iſrael's enemies, but the adverſaries of the Divine Being in this world, condemns and imprecates vengeance againſt them; or rather, as a prophet, he predicts and announces what would inevitably be their doom: Yet, in this, he ſometimes uſes a reſerve, and expreſſes his concern for their miſerable ſituation. *I beheld tranſgreſſors, and was grieved, for they kept not thy word.* Pſalm cxix. 159. He was grieved, not on his own account, although he ſuffered much from them, but on theirs. When they rewarded evil for good, to the ſpoiling of his ſoul, he tells us what his behaviour was, at leaſt as to ſome of them. Pſalm xxxv. 13. *As for me,* ſays he, *when they were ſick, my clothing was ſackcloth: I humbled myſelf with faſting, and my prayer returned into my own boſom.*

It is difficult, indeed, to reſtrain indignation, and not to execrate the perſons, as well as the works of the wicked; when we behold them inſulting and trampling the laws of God, and all the rules of human life, under their feet. They are, in this reſpect, objects of human juſtice, when it can be exerciſed againſt them. If men turn lawleſs, they forfeit the protection of the laws under which they live,

live, and juſtly ſuffer the puniſhments annexed to the tranſgreſſion of them. But, in caſes of private injuries, which come not under the eye and cogniſance of the public juſtice, we ought to adopt and follow the goſpel precept, *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourſelves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay it, ſaith the Lord.* To which ſentiment, indeed, that of the Pſalmiſt accords, Pſalm 37. 8, & 10. *Ceaſe from anger, and forſake wrath: fret not thyſelf in any wiſe to do evil. For yet a little while, and the wicked ſhall not be; yea, thou ſhalt diligently conſider his place, and it ſhall not be.* It is enough to reſtrain our wrath, and know from the word of God, that the wicked in heart, and incorrigible, *treaſure up unto themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath*, the day of the *revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ſhall render to every one according to his works; to them who are contentious, and obey not the truth, indignation and wrath; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good.*

LECTURE XIV.

PSALM XXXVII.

VERSE 1. *Fret not thyſelf becauſe of evil doers, neither be thou envious againſt the workers of iniquity.*

THERE is a diſſatisfaction with which pious minds are ſometimes diſturbed, againſt which the Pſalmiſt here endeavours to guard himſelf, and others, who profeſſed to be the true Iſrael of God. They repine at the order of Providence, that permits the temporary proſperity and ſucceſs of *evil doers*, who are ſeen in this world

world *to bring their wicked devices to paſs.* While the good, the faithful, and virtuous ſoul is hindered from doing the good to others he wiſhes and intends, by his poverty, or for want of the means or opportunity of exerciſing his benevolent diſpoſitions, theſe *evil doers* are beheld to accompliſh their ignominious and lawleſs purpoſes with little trouble or difficulty. But, notwithſtanding this dark appearance of the providential government of God, the Pſalmiſt declares, that it forms no juſt objection to the wiſdom and righteouſneſs of his procedure; nor ought it to occaſion any cloud of diſcontent to ariſe in the minds of his people, or excite envy, at the apparent felicity of thoſe workers of iniquity. For ſuch as take it in this view, muſt be conſidered as eſpouſers of the ſyſtem of the impious, and join with them in ſaying, that *there is no perfect wiſdom* or moral excellency in the Moſt High. None who believe in God can ſuffer their minds to be in the leaſt tainted with this groſs opinion; by which they reſign thoſe becoming and delightful thoughts of him which inſpire a confidence in the wiſdom and rectitude of his ways. But why, after all, ſhould we fret or be diſcompoſed at this kind of probation, that God has appointed in our ſinful and ſuffering ſtate; any more than at other calamities or diſtreſſes which we own to be not unſuitable to it. While we know any thing of the dignity of virtue; while we ſet a value on a good conſcience, it ſeems ſtrange and inconſiſtent to envy men who have made ſhipwreck of theſe principles, and preferred worldly paſſion or advantage to the only true honour and dignity of human nature.

VERSE 2. *For they ſhall ſoon be cut down like the graſs, and wither as the green herb.*—But the Pſalmiſt here aſſures us, that this appearance in providence is, by no means, a general or continued one. It is beheld only like ſome paſſing cloud in the bright firmament of heaven: Nay, he declares that the reverſe of the proſperity of the wicked, and their downfal, is more remarkable than their exaltation: *They ſhall ſoon be cut down like the graſs, and wither as the green*

green herb. Their ſtability has not the duration of thoſe plants which have a deep root in the ground; but may rather be likened to the ſhort lived verdure of the tender graſs, *which ſprings up in the morning;* and before the evening it is conſumed, or dried up. How often is the triumph of the wicked thus cut ſhort? How often does their deceitful glory fade away in a moment? Their *root proves as rottenneſs, and their bloſſom goes up as the duſt;* becauſe they have deſpiſed the law of the Lord, and are not planted by him who is huſbandman of the moral and ſpiritual vineyard.

VERSE 3. *Truſt in the Lord, and do good: ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed.*--Of all principles which tend to quiet the mind, and compoſe the ſoul under every diſpenſation, that of pious truſt and confidence in God is the chief and moſt excellent. Cheriſh it, therefore, ſays the Pſalmiſt, all ye *who profeſs to reverence and fear him.* While others are ruffled and quite diſcompoſed with the accidents of life; whiſe they vary their actions and character according to outward circumſtances; while a ſingle day of adverſity overſets all their principles; there is one certain rule embraced and adhered to by the true ſervants of God: They ceaſe not to act a conſiſtent part, and do their duty: They continue to acquit themſelves with integri y and a good conſcience before God: They weary not in well-doing, under temporary troubles and diſtreſs: *They hope ſtill in God,* and expect the accompliſhment of his merciful promiſes, that their *neceſſary bread ſhall be given them, and their water made ſure.* Under the law, there were ſpecial aſſurances that *the heritage of the juſt and righteous* ſhould remain with them and their children; and that they ſhould be diſtinguiſhed above others even by temporal bleſſings. What a large part of mankind are left with no other comfort but the faithful word of God, which requires them to truſt in him, and do good? Shall we grudge that he has aſſigned them no better portion? What nobler one would we have, than the refuge to be found in his perfections? Do the poſſeſſors

poſſeſſors of the clods of the earth enjoy a higher privilege? Does the great Sovereign of all the earth diſtinguiſh them as favourites by theſe gifts? No more ſurely than he diſtinguiſhes the fowls of the air, the cattle on the mountains, or the fiercer animals in the deſert, by the proviſion and nouriſhment he has made for them. The only pre-eminence the former can claim, is reducible to their ſenſe and acknowledgment of the Author of all their mercies, and of the proper uſes to which they ought to be turned. But if God's people depend on him for their daily maintenance; if they are called to truſt in him for it; they ſeem to be treated more upon the footing of the *children of his houſe*, and to be connected with him by a more cloſe and intimate tie; while others in the world are ſet off, as it were, at ſome diſtance from him, with their greater earthly portion.

VERSE 4. *Delight thyſelf alſo in the Lord; and he ſhall give thee the deſires of thine heart.*—If, to truſt in God, his people join delight in him, that is, ever regard him as their ſupreme felicity; if they ſeek their chief good in his favour, and not in the periſhing enjoyments of this world, he will give them the deſires of their hearts. They ſhall find full contentment to their ſouls; for their utmoſt wiſh and deſire can be nothing more but *what pleaſes him.* If they, by ignorance or miſtake, carry their wiſhes to any thing beyond that, they will be ſoon corrected of their error. He will inſtruct and teach them to know what is good, and beſt for them to receive. They will own how weak and blinded they were to have any ardent wiſh about the world, or the things of it, above what their heavenly Father has allowed to them. If, even in lawful deſires, they find themſelves retrenched, they know that a compenſation will be made; that what is wanting in one mercy can be abundantly ſupplied by another and better; for, out of *his fulneſs they ſhall receive, and that grace for grace.*

VERSES 5, & 6. *Commit thy way unto the Lord: truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs. And he ſhall bring forth thy righteouſneſs as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.*—The Pſalmiſt here ſuppoſes, that the ſufferings of a good man may be rendered extreme, and ſuch as, in haſte, he may reckon intolerable. But if this ſhould happen by the injuſtice or violence, by the malice or the rage of wicked men; yet, ſays he, 'Take no counſel with thy paſſions; take not advice from the children of the world; remember thy principles, O ſervant of God! and ever conſider that he is the judge and the rewarder of the actions of all men. Is not thy cauſe ſafe in his hands? Is not an appeal to him, for thy innocence and integrity, a ſufficient reſource, when his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, for the ſupport of his ſervants? At leaſt, let no diſtruſt of his promiſed protection, no unbecoming indignation or impatience, hurry thee on to imitate the wrath and violent paſſions of thoſe who are contemners of the divine law, and therefore juſtly condemned. Wait but a little, and the rage of the ungodly ſhall prove abortive, like the ſtormy wind that ſtrikes in vain againſt the firm wall. It ſhall be repelled; and thy innocence ſhall be made to ſhine forth like the ſun, from under a cloud; when he appears to collect a greater ſplendour of his rays.' But, if it be the will of God that this cloud ſhould remain undiſſipated for a ſeaſon; if it hangs over a few of the morning hours of this life; behold, the noon-tide ſhall come: The Sun of Righteouſneſs ſhall riſe to his meridian: The unclouded day of God's righteous judgement ſhall be uſhered in. Then ſhall he write, as *with a ſun-beam*, the vindication of his ſervants. Their faces, that were obſcured with the falſe reproach of the world, ſhall be lightened in his preſence; ſo lightened, that angels ſhall ſay, *Theſe are they who have ſuffered* the ſcorn and contumely of ungodly men; but now it is wiped away before God for ever. Come, ye faithful ones, all your labours are finiſhed; enter now into the reſt and joy prepared for you.

VERSE

VERSE 7. *Reſt in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyſelf becauſe of him who proſpereth in his way, becauſe of the man who bringeth wicked devices to paſs.*—Here the Pſalmiſt reſumes and ſums up the general exhortation and argument he had ſet out with in the 1ſt verſe. The whole of it is reducible to this ſhort ſtate. As there is a ſure foundation for compoſure under every trouble, from the ſenſe and conſideration of the perfections of God, and his wiſe and juſt ſuperintendency over all things; as it is viſible to every attentive mind, that, in the courſe of his providence, he brings order out of apparent confuſion; let the faithful ſouls reſt here; and diſmiſſing all improper anxiety about the final iſſue of things and events under his government; let them wait with becoming patience for the diſplay that will at laſt be made of his righteouſneſs, and of his gracious care for their ſalvation. Let them be aſſured, that no enterpriſes of the wicked can thwart the plan of his moral adminiſtration, or defeat the juſt and righteous ends of it: Let them ſay, in a holy confidence in this, *Verily, the wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee, the remainder of wrath ſhall thou reſtrain.* But it is fit only for the impious and ungodly to ſhow their violent paſſions, and think they do well in framing their ſentiments and actions according to the impulſe of them; while it will ever be part of the character of the pious and truly good, to guard themſelves againſt their influence; and, as the Pſalmiſt adds, *to ceaſe from anger, and to forſake wrath, and not to fret themſelves in any wiſe to do evil.* Upon the whole, we may ſee, and be convinced, that without the principles of religion, the mind of man is apt to be toſſed with many fears, doubts, and perplexities. There is nothing found agreeable in life, nothing ſatisfactory, without a firm belief and perſuaſion of the exiſtence of the eternal mind, and of the infinite wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs of his moral government, and of all his appointments. But where this great principle takes place in the mind, it not only teaches ſubmiſſion and acquieſcence in the ways of his providence; but inſpires a holy truſt and reliance upon him, as ruling and ordering every event for the beſt, and as ever *able to make*

all things work together for the good of thoſe who, by a patient continuance in well doing, endure into the end of their lives. Let us, then, equally revere the ways of his providence and the methods of his grace, and be perſuaded, that he who daily and every moment preſerves our lives from deſtruction, who makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice over us for good, will alſo prove himſelf the benefactor and Saviour of the ſouls of his faithful ſervants; and by means of that light he has given from above, and the revelation he has made of himſelf, qualify us, if ſuch, for higher degrees of felicity, and introduce us into ſcenes, where the clouds that now ſurround us ſhall no more appear, and the honours and rewards that wait on religion and virtue ſhall be manifeſted. Laſtly, Let it ever be the firm and ſettled principle of our minds, *that no real evil can befal the good and the upright in heart, even in this life.* There is nothing allotted to them but what is part of the plan of heavenly wiſdom, and conducive to their ſpiritual and everlaſting welfare. They need fear nothing but any failure in their duty or obedience. This alone can create their infelicity and their fall. But, while they perſevere in a courſe of integrity, while they do juſtice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God, the trials and troubles that may ariſe can only add to the luſtre of their character, to their honour, and their crown of glory. *Say unto the righteous, it ſhall be well with them,* is the animating aſſurance given to all true ſervants of God, not to fear what man can do unto them. He, in whom they truſt, is an almighty protector, who will keep them in the *ſecret of his preſence from the ſtrife of tongues, and the pride of men.* In all troubles he is nigh them to command deliverance, and to make thoſe outward afflictions, which are but for a moment, conſpire for their attainment of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

LECTURE XV.

PSALM LIX.

VERSE 1. *Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that riſe up againſt me.*

IT is with regret that any good man calls his fellow creatures, and much more thoſe of his own country and city, his enemies. But this appellation, how diſagreeable and harſh ſoever it be, is incurred by the wicked; and from the mouth of the godly themſelves, is juſtly applied to them. The Pſalmiſt here, and in other places, uſes it to deſcribe thoſe, who, without provocation or injury from him, ſought his life; who, inſtead of pacifying the rage of ſoul, and endeavouring to divert the evil ſpirit that ſometimes ſeized him, preſented themſelves readily to execute his cruel and bloody purpoſes. There are men, my brethren, who are pleaſed to ſee the paſſions of others, eſpecially of the powerful and mighty, all on fire, as Saul's were at this time; they hope maliciouſly to turn awakened fury to their advantage, and to direct it to ſome action that may gratify their particular wrath and reſentment. Such were thoſe whom David calls his enemies; and they were, indeed, the enemies of all public and private peace in ſociety; from whoſe hands he earneſtly prays to be delivered. It is the ineſtimable happineſs of a pious mind, when troubles ariſe from the perſecution of the wicked, that it contemplates God as an ever preſent, and all powerful deliverer. The Pſalmiſt's ſenſe of the divine protection appears from many expreſſions he uſes with reſpect to it, to be ſtrong and lively: And, unleſs

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we fly to him, by fervent prayer, as our only refuge, we cannot expect his interpoſition in our behalf. If we truſt in ourſelves, we ſhall be left to feel the inſufficiency of our own ſtrength; if we make man, or the arm of fleſh, our only confidence, we ſhall prove that they are either unable, ſlow, or reluctant altogether, to afford the neceſſary protection. But, however ſtrong, however many, their adverſaries be, the pious and faithful experience, to their comfort, that the God whom they ſerve, the Almighty whom they invoke, is a ſure and never failing rock of defence.

VERSE 2. *Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and ſave me from the bloody men.*—The Pſalmiſt in theſe words characteriſes his enemies by the epithets of *workers of iniquity, and of bloody men.* Such ſons of *Belial* they were, that acts of injuſtice might be reckoned the buſineſs of their lives, and violence and cruelty their entertainment. A good man, like the Pſalmiſt, will hold no others as his enemies, but ſuch as run on to this exceſs of wickedneſs, and come up to the black deſcription here given. It is not a ſmall offence, or an ordinary tranſgreſſion, that will excite him to hatred of the perſons of men, and to paſs ſentence upon them as enemies to God and all goodneſs. He will not altogether throw up ſociety with them, while there is any proſpect that they may be reclaimed. But where all hope of this is gone, when repeated and heinous iniquities blot their character, and prove them incorrigible, nothing remains but to fly as far as poſſible from them. *O that I had wings like a dove*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, lv. 6. *for then would I fly away, and be at reſt.* But if, in the providence of God, this is not permitted to us, which was the caſe of the Pſalmiſt at this time, then muſt we adopt the prayer he puts up to God for deliverance. We muſt confeſs, and own with him, that our ſafety can only proceed from above, and expreſs our hope and truſt, that he will appoint ſalvation for us, in the time and way moſt ſuitable to his unerring wiſdom, and moſt conducive to our ſpiritual and everlaſting good.

VERSE

VERSE 3. *For lo, they lie in wait for my ſoul; the mighty are gathered againſt me: not for my tranſgreſſion, nor for my ſin, O Lord.*— It often happens that the wicked, in perſecuting the righteous man, join craft to their power. They lie in wait to catch and enſnare him, and uſe every artful device to bring their purpoſes to paſs. This ſhows that no vigilance of ours can be a ſufficient guard againſt their malice; and that it is no leſs difficult to beware of their wiles, than to combat their ſtrength. How often, then, may the innocent be ſurpriſed and overtaken? They are without guile, and unſuſpicious, and therefore the more expoſed. But their ſecurity is declared in the beautiful expreſſions of the Pſalmiſt, Pſalm cxxi. *Behold, he that keepeth Iſrael ſhall neither ſlumber nor ſleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy ſhade upon thy right hand. The ſun ſhall not ſmite thee by day, nor the moon by night.* To this ſecurity, which is the greateſt, the Pſalmiſt here adds, that when they ſuffer, or are perſecuted by the arts or violence of the wicked, *it is not for their ſins or tranſgreſſions.* Not that they can acquit themſelves of all iniquity before God: In his pure ſight they acknowledge themſelves ſinful, and juſtly liable to puniſhment; but they deny the malicious accuſations and falſe ſlanders of men againſt them; nay, they claim to have maintained a conſcience void of offence, and to have given no occaſion for the criminal charge of their enemies. If then in this world we are not exempted from the aſſaults of the wicked, our merciful Creator has not left us without a defence, but has promiſed us that which is the greateſt and beſt, even his *own*; the only one ever mighty and powerful to ſave. He has appointed for us that impenetrable ſhield of a good man, his integrity, and the teſtimony of a good conſcience. O preſerve it, my brethren, for the day of ſuffering and trial! Keep it for the time of trouble, for ſickneſs, and the hour of death. Then ſhall it prove a relief, a ſweet conſolation to you, when every other is far removed.

VERSE 4. *They run, and prepare themſelves without my fault: awake*

awake to help me, and behold.—The eagerneſs with which wicked and ungodly men ruſh to the hurt and oppreſſion of the innocent, is ſtrongly expreſſed in theſe words. Accounting them a lawful prey, and believing themſelves at liberty to exerciſe all manner of outrage againſt them, they are ſaid *to run, and prepare themſelves.* And it is no wonder that thoſe who act from the impulſe of their paſſions ſhould thus make haſte. The purpoſes of their heart will not endure deliberation. Reflection might awake their conſciences; the *terrors of God might lay hold on them*, and overwhelm their ſpirits; if they conſidered for a moment, that *he ſees and beholds all the actions of his creatures*, they might well be confounded. When the Pſalmiſt expreſſes this invocation of God, and his appeal to him, in theſe words, *awake to help me, and behold*, he does not mean, that *he*, whom he calls the watchman of Iſrael, is ever inattentive to what paſſes here below; but, ſpeaking after the manner of men, he prays that God would ariſe powerfully to his aid, and diſconcert all the machinations of his enemies.

VERSE 5. *Thou therefore, O Lord God of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, awake to viſit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked tranſgreſſors. Selah.*—Here, the Pſalmiſt, contemplating, as a prophet, how awfully the God of Iſrael would ariſe for the puniſhment of all the heathen nations, who *reprobated and blaſphemed his holy name* upon earth, expreſſes himſelf as approving of this juſt and determined act of vengeance againſt them; in which it would be ſeen, that he would ſpare, or *ſhew mercy*, to none of them, whether communities of men, or individuals; who, in his all-ſeeing and impartial eye, were numbered in the claſs of *preſumptuous and wicked tranſgreſſors.* How far his enemies, who thirſted for his blood, and were *then* in conſpiracy to deſtroy him, merited to be proſcribed, and to undergo the doom of the heathen people, he appeals unto God as the ſole judge. Yet he could not forbear deſcribing, in poetical language, the ſcenes that paſſed, night and day, in the town,

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to which, after eſcaping from the javelin Saul darted againſt him, he had fled, and there concealed himſelf. Thither the band of aſſaſins, ſent by that Prince to *watch and to ſlay him*, had followed cloſe, and hung upon his retreat. Their conferences in the day-time were ſuch as abandoned wretches hold among themſelves, about the manner of perpetrating any of their ſanguinary deeds; and with what unfeeling, and relentleſs hearts, they were to proceed in the preſent enterpriſe. If true to one another, fear they could have none of a diſcovery, at what hour they were to fall upon the *ſon of Jeſſe*, condemned to death by Saul, and who was now hid in ſome dark corner. None would dare to give information of his danger, much leſs lift up a hand or weapon in his defence. Like the clathing together of ſwords, the heatheniſh expreſſions of their mouths chimed harſhly to each other. Taking mutual confidence and courage from their intermingled and horrible execrations, they come, at the fall of day, into the city, and go round about it, uttering dreadful *yells*. So brutes of the fiercer *canine* kind, which, having ranged about the fields all the day for food, and miſſed of it, return famiſhed into the place from whence they departed. Diſmal and hideous are their *bowlings* heard in the ſtreets. Their noiſe is more doleful and offenſive to human ears than that of the *birds of night*; when ſeveral of them, being percht together, they *hoot* alternately, or anſwer to one another by long, protracted, dreary, and ill-boding ſounds.

But, however mighty in their own eyes thoſe impious men might appear, and, as they thought, capable of accompliſhing whatever their malice or wickedneſs could ſuggeſt, yet, ſays the Pſalmiſt,

VERSE 8. *But thou, O Lord, ſhalt laugh at them; thou ſhalt have all the heathen in deriſion.*—Although weak minds might tremble at what they were permitted to do, and even the pious and faithful be put into a temporary fear, it muſt be evident to every one, who pays the leaſt attention to the courſe of events in the world, that they are

by no means ruled and ſwayed by human counſels, or human power: So far on the contrary, indeed, that, where theſe appeared to be in full force and agency, they have been often reverſed by means, in any eſtimate of them, weak; and which, if they operated at all, were deemed too contemptible to be regarded as of any conſequence in important events. In this view, David's eſcape from the power of his enemies may well be conſidered. When his life was expoſed to the utmoſt hazard, and, without a miracle in his favour, it ſeemed almoſt impoſſible it could be ſaved, the hand of Saul's daughter proved ſufficient to deliver him. Given him for a ſpouſe, under colour of doing him the greateſt honour, but, in reality, *to be a ſnare* for his deſtruction, in many perilous combats with the *Philiſtines*, *Michal* acted as became her. Although ſhe knew to what a height her father's rage would be excited, ſhe *let him out from a window*, under the cloud of night; and, leſt he ſhould be overtaken in his flight, ſhe told Saul's meſſengers that *he lay ſick in bed.* Upon their returning with this report to their lord and maſter, he ſaid, *Then bring him up to me in the bed, that I may ſlay him.* 1. Sam. xix. 12, 14, 15.

If, then, it was viſible, in the common providence of God, that by feeble, and ſeemingly impotent means, the counſels of the ungodly and wicked, in ſpite of all their worldly power, were many times fruſtrated, and they themſelves, uſing craft, were taken in the ſnare laid for the pious and innocent; how much more might this be expected to take place, with regard to thoſe who, in a more ſignal manner than others, bore the character of his ſervants, and, by their devout affections, and ſuitable behaviour, were known to be ſuch. David was not only one of this eſtimation, but a perſon choſen and appointed of God to ſet up his holy tabernacle in Zion, and maintain its religious inſtitutions in their purity; which run the greateſt hazard of being ſubverted by the irregularity of Saul's temper and mind, that, to other inſtances of inſane ferocity, led him to give command for the ſlaughter of the prieſts of the Lord, under the

pretext

pretext of their having favoured David's eſcape, or their not informing him, when they knew of his flight; ſo that of thoſe who *wore the linen ephod*, fourſcore and five perſons were put to the ſword in one day. This butchery in the city *of Nob*, *was extended to men and women, children and ſucklings, and to the oxen, aſſes, and ſheep of the place*; an awful warning, ſurely, what others might expect, who incurred the diſpleaſure or ſuſpicion of this dark-minded and unhappy Prince. 1. Sam. xxii. 18, & 19.

Againſt all this train of ſnares, perſecutions, and acts of cruelty, on the part of his enemies, what had David to oppoſe? This he declares in the 9th and 10th verſes; in which, although the words be not arranged according to our conſtruction of ſentences, but that uſed in the Hebrew language, their meaning is ſufficiently plain; *to wit*, that, placing all his ſafety in the ſtrength of God, he *would wait patiently* for the exertion of it in his behalf; and that, as every other ſafeguard was wanting to him, he truſted the more that God would prove his Almighty Protector. 'Nay, adds the Pſalmiſt, 'ſo great is the mercy of that God in whom I confide, that I know 'he will obviate or allay my natural fears, and give me aſſurance 'that I *ſhall ſee fulfilled my deſire upon mine enemies*.' When he expreſſes himſelf in this manner, we may be ſure that it was revealed to him, as a prophet, that ſuch would be the manifeſt iſſue of the conteſt; and, therefore, in the 11th verſe, inſtead of ſpeaking doubtfully of it, he only declares unto God what he wiſhed and believed might be the mode of the puniſhment of his inveterate enemies. But here, as upon other paſſages of the Pſalms, a great exception is taken, and a loud cry is raiſed againſt the diſcoveries he is alledged to make of a reſentful and vindictive ſpirit.—To what has been ſaid upon this point in Lecture XIII. Pſalm XXXVI. the following obſervations may be added. But, in regard that they may run out to a conſiderable length, they muſt be caſt into the form of another lecture.

LECTURE XVI.

PSALM LIX. Continued.

THE *firſt* obſervation to be made, in anſwer to the objection ſtated in the end of the preceding lecture, is, that David was, from his natural temper, neither paſſionate, or given to reſentment. The record preſented in Scripture, (and a moſt faithful one it muſt be acknowledged to be), of his behaviour in his early years, abſolutely confutes any ſuch ſuppoſition. Introduced, when ſcarce in puberty, to the court of Saul, to divert, with his muſic, the melancholy moods of the King, his manners were gentle and conciliating; nor did his overthrow of *Goliah*, an atchievement ſufficient to have blown up a mind leſs compoſed, into vanity and inſolence, appear to have made the leaſt change in his natural diſpoſitions. He became the favourite of the whole court, and was *acceptable for his wiſe and engaging behaviour, both in the ſight of the people, and of Saul's ſervants.* But the love which *Jonathan* bare him, and that was returned with the ſame ardour, proved an example of that mutual affection and benevolence which knits two human ſouls together, as if they were one; and, from the rarity of it, and the honour it does to human nature, has been admired, and celebrated, when beheld, with notes of praiſe, both in ſacred and profane hiſtory. David, therefore, was in the habit of exerciſing not the harſh and ſelfiſh affections, but the kindly and ingratiating. He was moſt reſpectful and ſubmiſſive to Saul; and, although made *the drudge* in all his wars with the Philiſtines, he obeyed, without murmuring, his capricious commands. When driven into exile from his country, and purſued by Saul into the

the *caves* and *dens* of the earth, did he, in this extremity, diſcover a ſpirit of revenge? No, not even that degree of wrath and reſentment which the law of ſelf-preſervation would have juſtified. As is the caſe with men, trained in the ſchool of adverſity, he had learned to bear, with more temper and calmneſs of mind, than others could do, the trial of ill treatment and indignities from thoſe around him. The man who is not uſed to contradiction is the readieſt to break out into a paſſion; and he who feels inferiority to his opponent in any conteſt, in order to hide the appearance of it to others, is the moſt apt to uſe the words and geſtures of bravery. But, even in the eye of the world, the difference was ſoon obſerved betwixt the eaſily provoked and angry man, and the truly courageous and valiant; and that *magnanimity* was an endowment of the ſoul, diſtinguiſhable from, and of a nobler nature, than the working of unmanly, pitiful, and unavailing paſſion. In the Scriptural doctrine, under the Moſaic law, a religious principle was interpoſed, to reſtrain the riſe of indignation and wrath, at offences that were to be expected from the ungodly and profligate in the world. The ſervants of God were taught to look upon ſuch provocations not only as permitted, but often ſpecially ordered by him, for proving the conſtancy of the minds of his people, which they had reaſon to regard as a juſt appointment; conſidering that none of themſelves could be altogether acquitted of treſpaſſes, which, if not ſo heinous, were of a ſimilar kind, and ſtood in need of repentance, and pardon from God. Hence, when David, at the head of his army, was inſulted in the groſſeſt manner by the enraged *Shimei*, who came forth *curſing him, and throwing ſtones, and caſting up duſt* againſt him for a length of way; it was teſtified, that he knew well, and could practice the leſſon of ſubmiſſion to the divine will. When Abiſhai ſaid, *Let me go over, and cut off the head of this dead dog: Why ſhould he be ſuffered to curſe my Lord the king?* His reply was, *Let him alone, and let him curſe; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look upon mine affliction, and requite me good for his curſing this day!*

Behold!

Behold! my ſon, which came forth of my bowels, ſeeketh my life; how much more now may this Benjamite do it? 2 Sam. xvi. 9, 10, 11, 12.

2*dly*, With regard to entertaining in the heart the thoughts and deſire of revenge againſt a private and perſonal enemy, howſoever injurious; the principle inculcated in the laws of God, that *taking vengeance belonged alone unto him*, was a motive and inducement to all the profeſſed ſervants of God, not to indulge, or give way to ſuch abiding and rancorous wrath, but to quell and ſubdue the ſinful motions of it in their minds; or, otherwiſe, they would be conſidered as guilty of aſſuming his province in exerciſing juſtice and judgment among the inhabitants of the world. Upon this preſcribed principle, as well as that of its being forbidden to every Iſraelite, to lift up a hand againſt a king, who had received the ſacred annointing to that dignity, by the permiſſion of God, David acted in an exemplary manner. It was given him twice to have Saul's life in his power; and, for certain evidence of this, *to cut off at one time the king's ſkirt*, and, at another, *to take away the ſpear that ſtuck in the ground at the bolſter of his couch, and the cruſe of water that ſtood by it.* The conference between Saul and David that enſued upon ſuch behaviour by the latter, is one of the moſt ſingular, and alſo the moſt intereſting and pathetic of its kind that we meet with in hiſtory. It is rare, indeed, that we find two ſuch parties coming to an interview; and ſtill more ſo in the circumſtances that produced it. Apparent it was that a human mind tainted, like Saul's, with jealous fears, and rankling hatred of another, is not to be ſoftened and convicted of wrong, unleſs by ſome incident that is marvellous, and may be imputed to the hand of heaven; and that, even in *the caſe of evil being overcome with good*, or, in the figurative ſtyle of the evangelical Apoſtle, *coals of fire being heaped upon the head of ſuch an adverſary*, to melt down his wrath; yet often it will not prove a total diſſolution, but only a partial and temporary ſuſpenſion of it. This was exemplified ſo ignominiouſly by Saul, that no apology, but that of his inſane mind, can be offered for his behaviour. Read his profeſſed relentings, his confeſſion that

David

David was more righteous than himſelf, who had rewarded him evil for good; his conviction that the kingdom of Iſrael was deſtined for him, and to be eſtabliſhed in his hand; and his requeſting the oath of God to be given him, that his ſeed ſhould not be cut off, or his name deſtroyed out of his father's houſe. What was the effect of all this ſolemnly teſtified reconcilement to David? Informed by the Ziphites that he was in the wilderneſs of their territory, where he might be eaſily ſurrounded and taken, Saul returned with three thouſand choſen men to the purſuit of him. A ſecond diſgrace, like the former, attended the enterpriſe. It is remarked, that *David's heart ſmote him, becauſe he had cut off Saul's ſkirt.* This is moſt credible of him, conſidered only as a man in poſſeſſion of his reaſon, capable of reflecting calmly upon what he had done, and how far it was conſiſtent, either with a rule of prudence, or a religious principle. But we read not, nor is it probable, that Saul was touched with any check of conſcience for his unjuſt perſecution of, and perfidy to, David, except what was momentary, and confined to thoſe lucid intervals of reaſon, which a ſenſe of his life being put into the hand of his ſuppoſed enemy, and ſpared by him, might produce. Caſes of inſanity are various; but it is a known fact, that perſons ſo affected often loſe with their reaſon, in a great meaſure, if not wholly, their moral feelings, and, inſtead of ſenſibilities of this kind that beget remorſe, diſcover a callous temper and hardneſs of heart, which neither yields or liſtens to the moſt powerful arguments, or the tendereſt intreaties. 1 Sam. xxiv. 19.—Ibid. xxvi.

But it may be ſaid, if ſuch was Saul's condition, he ſhould have been regarded as an object of pity, and the perſecutions of David as no more than the effects of his *phrenſy*; which might be ſuppoſed to have proved abortive, although not in the manner, yet to as little purpoſe, as they did. By keeping upon the defenſive, and in arms, David marked himſelf out the more as an object of jealouſy, and liable to the aſſaults of a king diſordered in mind. Was it, then, incumbent upon him to make a ſurrender of his perſon to Saul, who,

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in his rage, had thrown his javeline at his ſon Jonathan, and, even in his relenting, had ſaid to David, *Thou haſt ſhewed me this day, how well thou haſt dealt with me. For, if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?* David had all reaſon to believe, that to preſent himſelf before Saul was inevitable death; and ſuch a ſtep, voluntarily taken by him, might juſtly be deemed, in a moral view, an undervaluing and contemning that life which God had ſo wonderfully preſerved. Yet ſtill, ſome will ſay, it became him, in order to allay Saul's jealouſies, to have betaken himſelf to ſome retreat, where he could give no ſhadow of offence. He did ſo; and found himſelf, alas! reduced to the ſad neceſſity of becoming an exile to the houſe of his father, his tribe, and his nation; and what was far more grievous to his ſoul, from the *Tabernacle of God in Iſrael.* His complaint, in the ſecond interview with Saul, was, that if the ſons of Belial had ſtirred up the king's wrath againſt him, they had *driven him out from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord*, declaring, in effect, he had no part in it, and that *he might go and ſerve other gods.* To this deplorable expulſion he is underſtood to refer in ſeveral paſſages of the Pſalms, as when he ſays, they had rendered him evil for good, *to the ſpoiling of his ſoul* of its chief comfort in this world: *For a full year and four months did David dwell an outcaſt from Iſrael, in the country of the Philiſtines, under King Achiſh: And Saul being told that he was fled to Gath, ſought no more again for him.* 1 Sam. xxvii. 4, & 7. David entered not the territory of Iſrael, but remained in that of the *Philiſtines* at *Ziklag*, where intelligence was brought him of Saul's fatal overthrow in battle, upon the mountains of *Gilboa*; ſtained with the blood of many of the people of Iſrael, and that of the king and his three ſons.

3*dly*, It is to be obſerved, that if David's behaviour to Saul was ſuch as has been ſtated, that he could, with a good conſcience, declare, *O Lord, my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him who was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that, without a cauſe, is mine enemy;) let*

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the enemy perſecute my ſoul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the duſt. Pſal. vii. 3, 4, & 5. This being admitted, I ſay, we muſt allow (unleſs David be ſuppoſed to have changed his natural temper, and his whole behaviour and character as a man), that he could not be diſpoſed to indite thoſe imprecations againſt his enemies, which are unwarrantable under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, but upon certain principles and motives, conſiſtent with the law of God, given to the people of Iſrael, then, as has been often obſerved, placed in ſingular circumſtances; and, joined with theſe conſiderations, upon grounds and reaſons ariſing from the part and character that David, choſen of God to be the *chief Pſalmiſt*, or *inſpired interpreter of the divine law*, had to fulfil and ſuſtain in the ſacred congregations of Iſrael. Wherefore, it is not enough to ſay, that he execrated his perſonal enemies, *as a prophet*, who knew, by ſpecial revelations, that they were reprobated of God as wicked and irreligious men, and adverſaries to the eſtabliſhment of the divine tabernacle and ſanctuary in Iſrael, in the way, and by the means, that God had appointed, and to which David, by many evident tokens of the divine favour, was pointed out to be eminently miniſterial. In order to underſtand, yet more clearly how David was juſtifiable and authoriſed to pour out, in many of his Pſalms, ſuch ſtrains of imprecation againſt his and Iſrael's enemies, we are to conſider, that the Moſaic law was ſupported, in a great meaſure, upon the principle of temporal rewards to religious and good men, and puniſhments to the atheiſtical and evil. The former were declared to be entitled to the bleſſing of heaven, and the latter to be laid under its wrath and curſe. To any generation of mankind, in the early ages of the world, when they were only learning the firſt leſſons of religion and the *fear of God*, it was requiſite that the ſanctions of the divine law itſelf ſhould be ſuch, as were moſt adapted to work upon their untutored and worldly minds. Therefore, the Deity is ſaid in the Scripture to have given, even to the people he had favoured with the revelation of his will, *ſtatutes and*

judgments that he had not choſen, but from the conſideration of the *hardneſs of their hearts*, that was common to them with the reſt of mankind. They had been trained up, from the days of Abraham, under the promiſe of temporal protection and favour to them and their children, as the reward of their faith in God, and obedience to his commandments. His arm of power was to be ſtretched out in immediate judgments upon the nations that preſumed to wrong, or injure them; nor can it be ſuppoſed that thoſe heathen people could, without a miracle being wrought in their minds, been taught by any other diſcipline, to ſtand in awe of, or to regard them. In the ſecond commandment of the law of God, it was inſcribed, that he *would viſit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hated him, and ſhew mercies unto thouſands of them that loved him, and kept his commandments.* We read in the 26th chapter of *Leviticus*, with what ſpecial temporal bleſſings the people of Iſrael would be favoured upon their rendering due obedience to the precepts delivered to them by the authority of God, as their lawgiver, and what dreadful ſufferings they would be condemned to as a nation, if they deſpiſed, or ſet at naught, any of his ſtatutes. The ſolemn and awful ſanctions of them are repeated in the book of Deuteronomy, chap. xxvii. with this additional circumſtance, that the people, after paſſing over the river *Jordan*, being called together upon mount *Gerizzim*, heard the divine bleſſings pronounced upon them by half of the heads of the tribes; and then, upon mount *Ebal*, the curſes by the others, as theſe were ſeverally annexed to their obedience or diſobedience. An adjuration by the *Levites* followed this tranſaction; in which every Iſraelite was bound, under the penalty of a curſe, to obſerve and keep the particular ſtatutes of God then mentioned; for, *at the rehearſal of each of them, all the people were to ſay, Amen.*

Hence was founded and kept up in Iſrael the doctrine, that every wicked, impenitent, and obſtinate tranſgreſſor of the divine appointments was obnoxious to, and would fall under ſome ſignal and apparent

parent ſtroke of God's indignation and wrath. To him alone appertained the avenging of his violated and broken laws; and, therefore, upon this received principle, and not from enthuſiaſm, or vain credulity, or a ſpirit of revenge, David may juſtly be underſtood to have ſpoken, when he reſtrained *Abiſhai* from ſtretching forth his hand to ſmite Saul to death; for *who*, ſaid he, *can do ſo againſt the Lord's anointed, and be guiltleſs*; adding, *As the Lord liveth, the Lord ſhall ſmite him; or his day ſhall come to die; or he ſhall deſcend into battle, and periſh.* 1 Sam. xxvi. 9, & 10. In theſe words, it is announced that Saul would die no ordinary or common death, but ſuch a one as might appear to proceed from the immediate hand of God. They may alſo be underſtood to be applicable to, and predict the fate of the execrable *band, who watched to take his life.* Of them he ſays, in faith, *My merciful God ſhall prevent me;* ſo obviate my natural fears of falling by their hands, that it ſhall be given me to ſee fulfilled *my deſires upon them.* With this aſſurance, he believed it allowable to him, to expreſs what he thought their doom ſhould be. *Slay them not*, ſays he; cut them not off ſuddenly, or all at once. Let them rather be puniſhed, after the example of *Cain*, that moſt unnatural murderer of his brother, who, in the judgment of God, had a *mark* ſet upon him, *not to be ſlain*, but to be known and deteſted as ſuch *a criminal*; while he *wandered a fugitive and vagabond in the earth.* The divine judgments, when inſtantly executed againſt tranſgreſſors, are tremenduous, and ſtrike the wicked with dread; but they are apt to be too *ſoon forgotten*, even by thoſe who have beheld them, and acknowledged, as my *aſſociates do*, the juſt and due vengeance of Heaven in them. It is, when they are adminiſtered gradually, that proper attention to them is called forth, and their remembrance kept up, in the minds of men. Beſides, as the Pſalmiſt intimates, verſe 12, by the infliction of them at intervals, an opportunity is afforded for obſerving, not only that notorious ſinners are not ſuffered to go unpuniſhed, but how the ſpecial ſins they have committed, and the aggravating circumſtances attending them,

are pointed out, and may be recogniſed in the manner of their puniſhment. So it may be ordered with reſpect to thoſe, adds the Pſalmiſt, who are utterly inſenſible to juſtice or humanity; who can ſhed the blood of their innocent fellow creatures with as little pity as the moſt ſavage animals have, when they rend in pieces and devour their prey. It is not enough, that ſuch monſters of cruelty ſhould be ſtruck to death at once with the *bolt* of Heaven. This would be to them a mercy, and not condign puniſhment. To ſet an example of divine juſtice, and of terror to others, they ſhould be beheld as ſo put under the *ſcourge of God*, as to have the time of their ſuffering lengthened out; and no mercy or pity ſhown to them, who had none for the human race. In the poetical deſcription the Pſalmiſt gives, verſes 13, 14, & 15, of what he thought all wicked and blood thirſty men ſhould be made to ſuffer, although ſuch had not been his perſonal enemies, can he be juſtly deemed to betray a cruel temper and diſpoſition? If ſo, we muſt throw the ſame reproach upon the moſt famous and approved legiſlators of antiquity, whoſe commendation it was, that they adopted, in their ſtatutes, the well founded maxim, that *to ſpare the wicked was cruelty to the good*. We have obſerved under what a heavy penalty, by the table of the divine law, the former were laid. Compared with it, that here pronounced by David againſt thoſe who had engaged to deſtroy him, is mitigated wrath and lenity. His ſentence goes upon a principle, the mildeſt admiſſible in human ſocieties, under the laws of God or of man, *which is*, that the puniſhment of tranſgreſſors ſhould be calculated more for their correction and amendment, than utter deſtruction; and that, where they appeared incorrigible, the pains they ſuffered ſhould be ſlow and lingering, and protracted as long as their lives. But, whether the blow of indignant Heaven was at once deſtructive of them, or divided, at diſtances of time, into ſeveral ſtrokes, the Pſalmiſt declares, verſe 13, that, in conſequence of the moral government of the Deity being obſerved to be conducted by this rule, that impious and abandoned men were ſubjected to, and,

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without ſincere repentance, could not eſcape ſome ſignal puniſhment in the courſe of their lives; not only were the wicked taught, to their ſad experience, but others made to remember always, that *he ruled* in this manner *in Jacob*, or among the children of Iſrael, more particularly; and alſo, in general, *unto the ends of the earth.*

While, under the law, the doctrine of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments was but *darkly* and *gradually* revealed, the religious principle and perſuaſion, that as certainly as there was a *God in the heavens*, he *made himſelf known* by the righteous and immediate, or temporal judgments, he executed in the world of men, could not be too ſtrenuouſly inſiſted upon in the *ſacred writings*, and eſpecially in thoſe parts of them that were compoſed for the public ſervice of the tabernacle or temple. Hence, as the proof of this truth was controvertible, from the apparent proſperity of impious and profligate men; and, as the Pſalmiſt's own caſe might be alledged to contradict his argument, in behalf of the divine juſtice, in the diſtribution of temporal rewards and puniſhments, he turns ſo many of his ſtrains to confute this objection. Excepting thoſe Pſalms in which he celebrates the praiſes of God, or records his ſpecial mercies to the children of Iſrael, there is no theme, throughout the whole of them, ſo often recurred to, or treated at ſuch length. We are to conſider, that the oppoſition to him, and the troubles he underwent, did by no means terminate at Saul's death, but were continued, with almoſt equal violence, by *the friends of that Prince's houſe*, for a courſe of ſeven years, during which he reigned *in Hebron*, only over *the tribe of Judah*; and had to ſupport himſelf and his adherents in the midſt of civil broils; which generally excite more rage of the parties, more particular animoſity, more perſonal enmities, than are known in other wars. Spiteful and malicious lies and calumnies, horrid abuſes of the *name of God*, by imprecations and curſes, are encouraged, and prevail in the domeſtic ſtrife. Thoſe who do not uſe the outrageous language of their party, are ſuſpected, and held to be apoſtates. That David's opponents, who were by far the moſt numerous,

merous, and therefore, proud, inſolent, and impious, from their apparent ſuperiority, we cannot doubt, and that they gave juſt and ample grounds for characteriſing them in general, after the manner he does. That he was not the *aggreſſor* in the ſtyle of calumny and impiety, we have all reaſon to believe.

Whether he did not think it allowable to him to retaliate upon his adverſaries, when he ſtood forth, in appearance, the weaker party, in defence of the honour of God, and true religion in Iſrael, may admit of a queſtion. When we conſider how much his ſpirit might be agitated and hurt in the conflict he had to ſuſtain, and that, upon certain emergencies, he was thrown into fits of deſpondencies ſo ſad, as he deſcribes them in various paſſages, that he imagined himſelf *forſaken of God, and about to be given up to the will of his enemies*: Is it not more reaſonable to aſcribe thoſe exceptionable inditements againſt his enemies to the confuſion of his mind, overpowered with diſtreſs, than to the prevalence of a ſpirit of revenge? Here, a candid judgment ſhould diſpoſe us to ſay, we behold a ſtriking proof of the imbecility of human nature, when the lights of reaſon, and *the candle of the Lord*, are with-held from it. Into what a contradiction does even his true ſervant then fall? He draws up a complaint unto God againſt his enemies, in that ſpirit and ſtrain of imprecation and revenge he had ſo juſtly condemned in them; he forgets that fundamental maxim in religion, which we find him often repeating in his Pſalms, that *if he regarded iniquity in his heart, the Lord would not hear him, either in prayer, petition, or complaint:* With what reverence the tabernacle of God was to be approached, and what *clean hands and pure hearts, holy, and without wrath*, the true citizens of Zion were to lift up unto him, we have ſeen in the explication of the 15th and 24th Pſalms, and may be traced in many others. In the canonical books of Scripture, if any part of them is liable to be miſtaken, it is fully corrected by another. No perſon, with common judgment and impartiality, can take the character of David, or his ſenſe and practice of religion and morality, from theſe interjected execrations of his

his enemies. We underſtand not, unleſs from the titles of ſome of them, at what time, or upon what occaſion, they were compoſed; and theſe titles are known to be often erroneous, or of doubtful credit, in marking either the author, or the event to which they refer. It alſo ſeems, that, when a title to any one was lacking, it was preſumed to be, and inſcribed, *a Pſalm of David.* This inſcription the 109th Pſalm bears, although the particular enemy, there ſtigmatized by many virulent ſtrokes, be ſo unknown, that conjecture reaches not to the diſcovery of him; and it is only by the application of one verſe in this Pſalm to Judas, Acts of the Apoſtles, chap. i. that it is inferred the arch traitor is propheſied of, and pointed out. As the collection of the Pſalms into one book, as we have it, was made long after David's time, it is not unlikely, for the reaſon given, that more of the imprecating parts would be aſſigned to him than were due. That they could form no conſiderable portion of the ſongs of Zion, when the ten tribes of Iſrael had ſubmitted themſelves to him, and all his enemies were humbled, we may be ſure. But, if we take them all as they ſtand for his compoſition, it muſt be allowed that he knew, if there was iniquity in his imprecations in the eye of God, he had to ſupplicate forgivenneſs for it; but that the effect of them would be, as to his enemies, null and void.

LECTURE

LECTURE XVII.

PSALM LXV.

VERSE 1. *Praiſe waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee ſhall the vow be performed.*

WE may conſider the firſt clauſe of the verſe, which is ſo beautiful and elegant, as the inſcription on the door of the tabernacle, or the firſt note that was ſounded by the muſicians of the temple, to awake the devout ſentiments and adoration of the tribes of Iſrael, when aſſembled for the public worſhip of God. The general voice of the people would take up the melodious note, and ſwell it with grave, ſweet, and ſolemn harmony. All would feel the elevating ſtrain, and receive a raviſhing impreſſion of the dignity of their exerciſe, and the permitted honour of their approach to the door of the ſanctuary; and much more of the tranſcendent glory of him, who had condeſcended to render it illuſtrious, by a viſible token of his preſence. *Praiſe waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion.* As if he had ſaid, 'Behold, graciouſly, a people, conſcious of their high 'privilege, when reverently obedient to thy command, and impel-'led by the moſt powerful motives, they ſtand forth to offer their 'tribute of honour and acknowledgment unto thee, O Moſt High! 'Behold! the ſenſe of thy numberleſs mercies remains with them; 'and, therefore, they come to thy holy mount, with a ready and 'willing diſpoſition to thy ſervice, as far as this may be performed 'in an earthly ſanctuary. But, ſince thou haſt called the hill of 'Zion by thy holy name, and conſecrated it to thy worſhip; to it

'they

'they gladly do reſort; and there preſent their morning and even-
'ing ſacrifice, their daily prayers, and praiſe! Accept them mer-
'cifully, according to thy promiſe!' This might more certainly be hoped for, by all the true Iſrael of God, who, as they made him the object of their religious vows, his laws the rule and meaſure of them, and his honour and ſervice the motives to them; accounted it their indiſpenſible duty to perform their engagements. Hence, it is obſervable, that every religious inſtitution, worthy of God, enjoins two things of great importance to the reformation of mankind, *to wit*, ſincerity in the profeſſion that is made, and fidelity in the diſcharge of their engagements. *Who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the Lord? and who ſhall abide in thy tabernacle? He who hath not ſworn deceitfully.* The views required or permitted in the law of God, were not, like thoſe of the heathen nations, ſinful, or vain in themſelves; but, being conſonant to his moral perfections, they tended to render his worſhippers wiſer and better. They were more forcible monitors to duties of a religious, or moral kind, that otherwiſe might have been deſpiſed or neglected. None could think of violating them, in the leaſt, who regarded the ſacred name and majeſty of the God of Iſrael, which was appealed to, in the ſolemn vows that were made. Let us, then, who profeſs to draw near to God, ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, *To thee ſhall the vow be performed.*

VERSE 2. *O thou that heareſt prayer, unto thee ſhall all fleſh come!*—But, leſt the pride or preſumption of the ungodly ſhould carry them to deride the religious aſſembly of thoſe who call on his name, and ſay, *who is the Lord, that we ſhould fear him?* the Pſalmiſt adds, *O thou that heareſt prayer, unto thee ſhall all fleſh come!* "Thou art the only object of our adoration, and who heareſt the ſilent prayer of the heart, as well as that which is expreſſed by the lips; art ever worthy of the general reverence of thy rational creatures. The homage they owe is indiſpenſible, and ariſes from a connection that cannot be broken off. From Thee all mankind

ſprung at firſt; and to Thee, their univerſal Father, and their God, they tend, by the decree of their nature, when the ſcene of this mortal life is cloſed. However diſtinguiſhed by their places of abode, by their ſituation, their order, and rank in the world, one way at laſt is appointed for them all. Through the gate of death all of them alike muſt paſs; and then every mark of worldly diſtinction ſhall drop off. Stripped of theſe, and of every diſguiſe, they ſhall be gathered in to Thee, from the eaſt, and from the weſt, from the north, and from the ſouth, and called to appear before thy righteous tribunal. There, the ſceptre of thy juſt government ſhall be ſtretched out, and known, in another way than that known in this world. Thy face ſhall then be ſeen, awful and tremenduous, as the judge of the characters and works of men. The impious ſhall fall proſtrate before its frowns; but the good, and the upright, ſhall be cheered with the light of it. In the doom of both, ſhall be diſplayed thy everlaſting righteouſneſs, and thy ſalvation. When, therefore, none of the children of men can eſcape this univerſal return to their Creator, and their Sovereign Ruler; ſince every knee muſt bow to him, and every tongue confeſs his authority and dominion in heaven and in earth; muſt not the reverence, honour, and ſubmiſſion paid him, by his ſervants here, be owned the firſt dictate of wiſdom; an employment ſuitable in itſelf, and conducive to their welfare in time, and for ever. Religion enjoins us now to do, what of neceſſity muſt be done hereafter: It engages us to the exerciſe of the angels in heaven, that we may be joined for ever with them, and not ſhare the fate of thoſe impious ſpirits, whoſe puniſhment proves their removal from the fountain of light and life; and that, where his mercy has been contemned, his juſtice will triumph.

VERSE 3. *Iniquities prevail againſt me: as for our tranſgreſſions, thou ſhalt purge them away.*—But in this worſhip and adoration offered to God in this world, it is not to be imagined, that there is ſuch

purity

purity in the beſt, as to denominate them altogether upright and free from tranſgreſſion. Nay, when they approach the ſacred altar of God, and conſider the ſpotleſs ſanctity of him whom they worſhip, they will be more ſenſible to every failure, to every ſtain of ſin, that adheres to them. Every one muſt be ready to confeſs, and ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *that iniquities prevail againſt me.* Such power is there in pure and undefiled religion before God, that it obliges to this acknowledgment, that all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God. When converſant with the holy law of God, even theſe iniquities that men account ſlight and inconſiderable, will riſe in the view of their minds, and appear juſtly offenſive to him, in whoſe ſight the heavens are not clear enough. But it is their conſolation to know, from his word, *that to him everlaſting mercies belong, that he hath proclaimed himſelf the Lord merciful and gracious, ſlow to anger, and abundant in goodneſs and truth.* Therefore, ſays the Pſalmiſt, ciii. 12. *As far as the eaſt is diſtant from the weſt, ſo far hath he removed our tranſgreſſions from us.* To purge away, or blot out, the guilt of ſin, appertains alone unto God. We are taught to regard it as the act of his mercy and grace, which no other power in earth, or in heaven, can diſpenſe. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins.* When we think, therefore, of excuſing or palliating our ſins, it becomes us to reflect, that God only can forgive them, and that their remiſſion is to be implored with penitential confeſſion and ſorrow at his altar.

VERSE 4. *Bleſſed is the man whom thou chooſeſt, and cauſeſt to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we ſhall be ſatisfied with the goodneſs of thy houſe, even of thy holy temple.*—But though there be no ſuch character as an unblemiſhed, or ſpotleſs one in the ſight of God, there is a difference which he notes among his worſhippers, and among mankind in general. There is a frame and diſpoſition of ſoul which he chooſes, and marks with particular approbation.

bation. There is a heart ſo turned to goodneſs, to the love of purity and truth, that he pronounces it acceptable to him. Of ſuch perſons, he declares that he will be inquired after, and, to their unſpeakable felicity, found of them. They ſhall be accounted worthy to hold ſacred communion and fellowſhip with him, and to enjoy the peculiar mercies belonging to this privilege. Here, while they ſerve him in his temple, there are tokens given them of their favour and acceptance with God, who is ſaid to lift up the light of his countenance upon them, and to create more gladneſs in their hearts, than the ungodly ever experience in the time of their greateſt proſperity, when their corn, wine, and oil increaſe. Of all pleaſures the rational, the moral, and the divine, which religion inſpires, are the moſt excellent and precious. They exalt and enliven the ſoul with contemplations of the eternal mind, of his boundleſs love and mercy to them who draw nigh to him in ſincerity and truth. They produce contentment and peace in the mind, from a conſciouſneſs of correſponding to the plan of the divine government, of being ſubſervient to the purpoſes of his will in the world, and glorifying him whether in their life or death. Upon them the influences of his grace deſcend, ſo as to make them abound with all the fruits of righteouſneſs. Approaching unto him in the ways of his ſanctuary, they are brought to a reſemblance with him, and have the honour of bearing his image. This, though here it cannot be perfectly traced out upon them, ſhall be their introduction to his bliſsful preſence in heaven; where, beholding, in immediate viſion, the glory of the Lord, they ſhall be changed into his image from glory to glory: For there their habitation is in the courts of the Lord for ever. In the earthly ſanctuary of God, we are called to extend our views to this future and perfect felicity of his ſaints; nay more, we receive the earneſts of our admiſſion to theſe regions of joy. What mortality can bear, what is ſuited to our preſent ſtate, is communicated to us. The proviſion is ſuch that we may well be ſatisfied with it, with the goodneſs of his houſe, even of his holy temple. Does our heavenly father

ther deign to diſpel our carnal prejudices, to reſtrain our inordinate affections, to guide us by the counſel of his word and ſpirit, to enable us to bear whatever his appointments are, and to walk in integrity before him: Does he aſſure us of grace here, and glory hereafter; it is enough, nay, it is a portion of felicity that leaves us no more to aſk in this world. Ye, therefore, to whom this ſpiritual inheritance is given, in a peculiar manner, under the goſpel, ought to prize and value it above all others. It is the riches both of his wiſdom and mercy, wherewith he hath abounded to us in Jeſus Chriſt. It is that by which alone we can be comforted under every affliction: In povery it will not forſake us, and in calamity it will prove a happy ſupport and ſtay. Other means of our conſolation will be found vain and ineffectual in theſe hours of darkneſs; but God hath made the light of his ſanctuary a ſure and never failing reſource to the mind. *O taſte and ſee*, ſays he, *that God is good; and bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him.* To enforce this important doctrine the more, the Pſalmiſt gives, in the verſes following, a lively and animated deſcription of the divine operations in the natural world; by which all things are arranged according to his will, and order, and beauty, made to ſhine forth in them. While we are ſtruck with this deſcription, or look around us in the world, and behold how it is verified, let us reflect how that ſame almighty power, infinite goodneſs and bounty is engaged in the protection of the pious and upright. They form a ſyſtem, a community of beings, far more noble than what are ſeen in the natural world. They are ſaid to be *the vineyard* which God has planted; and he mercifully declares, *I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; leſt any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.* If Iſrael was to be accounted a people favoured above other nations, by being under the ſpecial cuſtody of God, if, when theſe temporal mercies, which the Pſalmiſt deſcribes in ſuch pictureſque and beautiful language, were poured forth upon them with a libèral hand, it might be ſaid of Judah and Iſrael, they were, indeed, the *vineyard of God*; yet, how much more might this

be

be affirmed of them, when conſidered as objects of his ſpiritual favour and grace; and theſe providential gifts beſtowed upon them, were but as earneſts of more exalted bleſſings, when the light of the divine word being made to ſhine in upon their hearts, they became a people obedient to, and rejoicing in the teſtimonies and commandments of the living God; then ſhall be known and experienced by them what an ineſtimable felicity it is to be *planted in the houſe of the Lord, and grow up as trees of righteouſneſs*, in whom he will be honoured here, and glorified hereafter.

LECTURE XVIII.

PSALM LXVIII.

THE ſublime in compoſition has been often the ſubject of the diſcuſſions of the learned. They have laboured much to ſhow what conſtitutes this ſpecies of writing, and to point out its properties and excellencies: But their rules of judgment, and their ideas of it, are imaginary and vague, unleſs they be founded on thoſe great examples of it, which original genius has produced, and which is known to be a faculty of the ſoul, not taught or communicated from others, but given by nature, or divinely inſpired. But the models of the ſublime, which profane writers boaſt of, are generally defective in their ſubjects. They deſcribe, indeed, natural objects in lively colours, or paint the pernicious paſſions, or impotent rage of men: Or elſe, when they aſcend beyond the earthly and human ſphere, they are loſt in the darkneſs and abſurdity of their imaginations. The ſacred writings alone can be ſaid to give us ſublimity of ſentiment and expreſſion, and to exalt our ideas,

ideas, by the themes they inſiſt upon, and the objects they repreſent. How grand are thoſe which the Pſalmiſt every where holds forth, and how does he make them ſhine out in all the power and energy of language? The ſubject of the Pſalm now read appears to have animated the author to peculiar ſublimity; when he deſcribes the majeſty of the God of Iſrael, when he repreſents him ſeated on his holy hill of Zion, to preſide there with righteouſneſs and judgment; to make himſelf known, not to the tribes of Iſrael only, but to the nations around, to all kindreds of men on the earth, as their ſovereign ruler, as the awful witneſs of their actions, and their judge. It is believed that the Pſalm was compoſed on the ſignal and ſolemn occaſion of introducing the ark into the city of Jeruſalem, that it might be afterwards placed on Mount Zion.

VERSE 1. *Let God ariſe, let his enemies be ſcattered: let them alſo that hate him flee before him.*—Theſe words were pronounced by the prieſts and Levites, who bore the ark, as often as it was moved from one place to another: And what expreſſions ſo proper and emphatic could be uſed, to proclaim the preſence and majeſty of him, who deigned to be the leader and ſafeguard of the camp of Iſrael. When this ſentence was ſounded forth in it, all fear would be baniſhed from their hoſt. However ſtrong, however numerous, their enemies appeared to be, the tribes might well take courage, and ſay, *Greater is He that is for us, than all they who can be againſt us.* No other action was requiſite on the part of Iſrael's protector, *but to ariſe*, and give ſome token of his preſence, and his enemies, and thoſe of his people, would, in a moment, be ſcattered. The haters of his name would be hurried off in the ſpeedy flight of fear and diſmay. If men looked for them, the ſhew of their ſtrength would diſappear, and no veſtige of it be ſeen: Or, if their rout could be traced, it would be perceived darkly, *like ſmoke driven before the wind*, or as wax melted by the fire. In this manner ſhall all the wicked be conſumed, and periſh in the preſence of God, *when he ariſes to judgment.*

ment. And thus, we are aſſured, finally he will ariſe, to try every man's work, to ſearch his heart, and to unfold his real character. In that day no one's arm ſhall be ſtrong, nor his heart endure the awful trial, who has deſpiſed his law, and ſpurned his authority. Such only as have owned his moral government, and walked in the light of his precepts, ſhall be able to look to him without ſhame, terror, and confuſion.

But the Pſalmiſt adds, verſe 3. *Let the righteous be glad: let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.*—Amidſt the general conſternation which will involve the wicked, amidſt the darkneſs and deſtruction with which they ſhall be overtaken, the juſt have no cauſe to be diſmayed: Nay, the thought of God's ariſing to judgment may afford them a ſource of conſolation and joy; for it is declared, that he ariſes to ſave all the humble and meek ones upon earth. His terrors are not collected for their confuſion; his frowns announce no diſpleaſure againſt them: On the contrary, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it elſewhere, *Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart.* When they conſider all the gracious declarations of his word in their behalf, that *he is a ſun and a ſhield, that he will beſtow grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them;* that he comes to act the part of their deliverer from ſpiritual death, how great and inexpreſſible may their joy be. Thus their joy will increaſe the nearer they approach unto him. It is felt by his ſervants who now contemplate his divine perfections in the glaſs of his works, and in his word; and how tranſporting to them will it be, when they ſhall be admitted to *the viſion of the eternal,* behold the glory of his throne in heaven, and be, in a manner, changed into his image.

Verse 4. *Sing unto God, ſing praiſes to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.*—The Pſalmiſt, as if he felt that beam of joy which ſhall be the portion

tion of the righteous, in the day of their redemption, invites the tribes of Iſrael to join in celebrating his praiſe. Even now, ſays he, it is permitted to us to worſhip him in his ſanctuary, and to behold the ſymbols of his gracious preſence in his tabernacle. Come then before him, with gladneſs of heart, with acclamations of joy, and of praiſe, for all his works of mercy, for all the wonders he hath done. For lo! we are made to know him, not as confined within the curtains of the tabernacle, and dwelling between the viſible *cherubim*. His glory far tranſcends every houſe, every tabernacle, or temple, that can be built upon earth. It is exalted above the heavens, above every globe that ſhines, above every luminary that lights them. All theſe are only like a train to his glory; when he goeth forth in celeſtial majeſty; and his name *Jah* or *Jehovah*, by which he makes himſelf known on earth, is proclaimed in the heights of heaven.

VERSE 5. *A father of the fatherleſs, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.*—The tranſition the Pſalmiſt here makes, from deſcribing the power and glory of the Celeſtial King, to the view of his acts of grace and mercy to the children of men, is ſtriking and pathetic. After what he had ſaid, to illuſtrate the perfections of the One Eternal, it ſeemed that nothing more could be added. But the inſpired penman touches his ſubject again with a maſterly hand. Out of the viſion of divine glory, too elevated for human thoughts, he makes rays of mercy to come forth; and ſo diſplays the goodneſs, the love, the tender regard, and compaſſion of the Deity, to the pooreſt and meaneſt of mankind, that every human heart muſt be overcome, and melt at the declaration of God, as *a father of the fatherleſs*, and *a judge of the widow*. "Ye ſouls that feel compaſſion, bear this thought of God ever in your minds, and your bowels of mercy will be more enlarged. Ye inſenſible and hard hearted, for once conſider it, and you will be aſhamed that ye have no pity for the helpleſs and diſtreſſed; when God numbers it

among his attributes, and counts it a chief excellency in his divine nature, that he *regards the affliction of the afflicted, and hears their cry.* To intimate this commiseration more forcibly, the Psalmist calls him *the father of the fatherless.* When those appointed to minister to the necessities of their weak offspring are removed, he charges himself with the tender care of them. *When fathers and mothers both forsake them, he the Lord is said to take them up.* Or, if the parents live, he makes their children to arise like plants around them, and gives them more than any earthly father's blessing; peace, and comfort, with what they have. Such deliverance as he wrought for Israel, when he rescued them from the fetters and bondage of Egypt; the like he also performs for many oppressed ones in the world. At his command, their chains fall off; and they wonder to find themselves set free; while a visible stroke of judgment descends on the habitation of the violent, who, in the pride of their hearts, insult and trample upon the poor and indigent.

VERSES 7, & 8. *O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah: The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.*—These verses evidently refer to and describe the appearance of the Divine Majesty, in conducting the children of Israel, in their passage through the Red Sea, and the trackless paths of the wilderness. His immediate presence was then beheld in many awful signs. The earth was moved; the heavens were involved in clouds; from whence issued thunder and lightening; *so that mount Sinai itself trembled to its base.* But, we are to consider this, and other descriptions here added by the Psalmist, of the power and presence of God, as metaphorical views and illustrations of the glory, power, and victory, with which Christ, the Messiah, and spiritual deliverer of his church and people, was to be cloathed; when the *Almighty Father set him as King over his holy hill of Zion.* For then it was, that the

Lord

Lord gave the word, verſe 11, not of a temporal redemption only, ſuch as Iſrael experienced, but of a ſpiritual and everlaſting one. For, although the apoſtles, and firſt teachers of the word, ſeemed unequal to the enterpriſe of publiſhing it abroad; and, like the humbled Saviour himſelf, were contemptible in the eyes of men; yet ſuch divine power, ſuch ſupernatural influence, accompanied their miniſtrations, that all oppoſition from the proud, from the vain, from the ſuperſtitious, and from the profligate, from the deceivers, and the deceived, proved altogether inſignificant and vain. The overthrow of theſe ſupporters of the kingdom of darkneſs, and of the idolatry of the world, may be compared to the foiling of many kings, and their armies, here mentioned by the Pſalmiſt. They found the company of the publiſhers of the goſpel not only ſuperior to their eſtimation, but invincibly able, and ſufficient to pull down all the ſtrong holds of impiety and vice. Then aroſe the church of Chriſt, like the dove which has been pinioned, and ſtruggled hard to get free. It was mounted, and borne up on wings that *ſhone like the pureſt ſilver and gold.* The beauty and luſtre of truth were ſeen in this ſpiritual and heavenly fabric: It was fairer than the Jeruſalem on earth, or Zion hill, the ſeat of the Jewiſh tabernacle: It was the neareſt image of the Jeruſalem that is above. The qualities and graces of the true members of the church of Chriſt, reſembled thoſe of the inhabitants of heaven; for he who delivered their ſouls from death, had alſo engaged to ſanctify them by his ſpirit, and endow them with theſe excellencies, that might render them worthy to be called *the children of God*, and to be admitted into the company and bleſſed abodes of the angels in heaven. Thoſe exalted ſpirits ſhall welcome them, as faithful followers of the Redeemer; who roſe from the dead, *and aſcended on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men;* even for thoſe who, by nature, were rebellious, but now were perfected in their love and obedience to the living God; and who therefore hath ſaid, *that they ſhall dwell in his courts and preſence for evermore;* witneſſes ever of

the redemption wrought for them by his grace, and grateful celebrators of the Redeemer's unparalleled love; who *gave himſelf for them, and redeemed them from their ſins by his blood, and made them kings and prieſts unto God, and partakers of his glory.*

Upon the whole, it is to be obſerved, upon this Pſalm, what grateful remembrance of the divine mercy ought to affect the hearts and minds of the church and people of God. With what ſublimity of expreſſion does the Pſalmiſt here, verſe 19, and in other places, treat this ſubject; and while he throws it into a variety of lights, his pen runs on, and his words glow with more emphatic ardour! His inſpired compoſitions, therefore, formed a record not only of his own devotion, and gratitude to God, but of all the public honour and praiſe rendered by the tribes of Iſrael unto him. In them, the church, in all ages, and to the end of the world, muſt find leſſons of piety, ſuch views of the divine attributes, ſuch expoſitions of the laws, and righteous government of God, as are ſufficient to inſtruct the ignorant, warm the cold hearted, reprove and awe the profane and vitious, and encourage and animate all pious and faithful ſouls, to love, adore, and magnify, more and more, the God and Father of all their mercies. It is important, it is an intereſting queſtion, to aſk ourſelves; have we profited by the peruſal of his affecting and admirable compoſitions? Are we ſenſible, not to the beauty only, but to the ſpirit of devotion and piety that is breathed forth in them? If we have not caught a portion of it, let us earneſtly pray for it. The Pſalmiſt will give us the ſuitable words; and the God who inſpired him will anſwer them with the irreſiſtible power of his grace and ſpirit.

LECTURE XIX.

PSALM LXXII.

VERSE 1. *Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteouſneſs unto the King's ſon.*

THE laſt duty, which remains for a good man to do, when he finds his diſſolution approaching, is to ſet his family in order; to put up his departing prayer for the children he is to leave behind him in the world, and then to fold his eyes in peace. We ſee here how the King of Iſrael diſcharged this duty. We may obſerve what his ſupplication was in behalf of Solomon his ſon, deſtined to take his ſceptre, and fill the throne of Iſrael. He prays that God would give him his judgments, as his beſt qualification, and the nobleſt jewel of the crown that was to deſcend to him. He means, that the ſenſe and approbation of God's law and teſtimony, which are often called *his judgments*, ſhould be imprinted on the heart of his ſon. It may well be queſtioned, whether ever there was, or could be, a juſt or good King, in any nation, who had not a ſenſe of *a law* ſuperior to that which is *human*. Unleſs he conſiders the principles of juſtice and equity, as derived from a higher ſource than that of man's wiſdom, and ſtamped with higher authority, he can never regard them as binding upon him. What he thinks only commanded by man, and eſtabliſhed by cuſtom, muſt be accounted changeable by man; and he will readily ſubſtitute his will in the room of the law. But, when God is owned as the Sovereign Lawgiver, it is otherwiſe. His judgments impreſs the heart, and conſtrain

ſtrain the will, by their indiſputable ſanction and authority. The Sovereign is then rendered righteous, not by accident, but from a conſcientious principle, and conviction. The firſt thing, therefore, that David prays for is, that Solomon might be a real convert to the law of God, confeſſing from his heart its unchangeable authority, and acknowledging his obligation to the faithful obſervance of it. By this means only he could be made a partaker of the righteouſneſs of God; imitate that adorable juſtice and truth that is diſcoverable in his holy, wiſe, and righteous adminiſtration of all things. But ſuch a well diſpoſed heart is not naturally found in princes, no more than in other men: Nay, it is often more awanting to them; and, therefore, as the Pſalmiſt prays, it muſt be given them from above.

VERSE 2. *He ſhall judge thy people with righteouſneſs, and thy poor with judgment.*—But, if the law of God be thus found in the heart of a prince or ruler, its efficacy will be ſeen in the plan of his government, and in the tenor of his adminiſtration. He will then *judge the people with righteouſneſs.* He will conſider himſelf as called, and providentially commiſſioned, to diſpenſe juſtice with a ſteady and impartial hand. His ſceptre will only be the terror of the lawleſs, the profligate, and the evil doers. None but theſe, and ſuch as encourage them, ſhall tremble at the ſummons that is given them. The poor and innocent ſhall find their cauſe ſtated, and the equity of it attended to, without fearing the face, or dreading the influence of their proudeſt adverſary: For, one ſo inſtructed from above, knows that the law of righteouſneſs is made alike for all, and that the rich and poor are equally ſubjected to it.

VERSE 3. *The mountains ſhall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteouſneſs.*—In poetical compoſition, ſuch as the Pſalms are, frequent uſe is made of figures and metaphors, which elevate the expreſſion, and tranſport the imagination with beautiful ideas.

ideas. The Pſalmiſt, therefore, repreſents the inanimate parts of nature as partaking of the felicity communicated to a people, by a good and righteous king. *The mountains and little hills then bring peace to them.* Every part of nature ſmiles with ſerenity, and bears the bountiful fruits of induſtry and peace. It is ſaid elſewhere, *that the Lord reigneth; therefore let the earth be glad, and the multitude of the iſles thereof rejoice.* When God's law reigns among a people, and righteouſneſs flouriſhes, a like bleſſed effect is produced. It is that which makes every member of the community contribute ſomething to its general good. Every individual endeavours to perform the duty of his ſtation, and to excel in whatſoever *things are true, whatſoever are honeſt, laudable, and of good report.* In this manner virtuous action becomes the employment of all, *and righteouſneſs is ſeen to exalt a nation.* But far otherwiſe it is, when iniquity and vice prevail, and impious and violent men bear ſway: The land mourns; a dark ſhade is thrown over the face of nature; the verdure of the hills and valleys fades away; nothing is ſeen but a frightful deſart and deſolation, which abounding iniquity has produced. Thus, it will ever be found, that righteouſneſs is the joy and ſtrength of any land; while ſin proves its reproach and its ruin.

VERSE 4. *He ſhall judge the poor of the people, he ſhall ſave the children of the needy, and ſhall break in pieces the oppreſſor.*—Again the Pſalmiſt reſumes and touches over again that diſtinguiſhing property of a juſt king, already mentioned. His attention and care to exerciſe judgment for the poor, and deliver them from the outrage and inſult of the oppreſſors. It is a part of the kingly office, which is often little attended to; and as rulers and magiſtrates have diſregarded it, ſo the laws themſelves, in many countries, have not ſufficiently made it an object: Nay, they have been ſo framed, as to maintain the pride and violence of the rich and great, and to lay a heavy yoke of bondage upon the poor, and to grind the faces of the indigent. But the law of God condemns this tyrannical exerciſe of power,

power, and recommends the protection of the needy and diſtreſſed to every one in the ſeat of judgment and authority. Such a ruler or magiſtrate, as the Pſalmiſt here deſcribes, will not be wanting in this part of duty. He will be more attentive, when the cauſe of the poor is brought before him; and the ſentence he paſſes will not only be juſt, but have an *equity* in it, ſuited to the indigence of their condition. He will thus be found not only their deliverer, but the preſerver of their helpleſs and forlorn offſpring; who, if the letter of the defective human law had been followed, would have been left to periſh in want and miſery: But, if obſtructed in this procedure, if controuled in his acts of juſtice, by any ſon of violence, he will let it be ſeen, that *he bears not the ſword in vain.* Though reluctant to puniſh, the weight of the ſceptre ſhall then be felt, heavy and awful, as a rod of iron, to the dread and confuſion of all inhumane oppreſſors.

VERSE 5. *They ſhall fear thee as long as the ſun and moon endure, throughout all generations.*—It is evident from this verſe, and thoſe which follow it, that the Pſalmiſt was carried to the typical deſcription of a higher reign, than that of his ſon Solomon; and that a king and prince, far greater than he, is prophetically held forth to Judah and Iſrael; and, through their ſanctuary, declared to be raiſed up of God, and ſent in time, not to them only, or to have a temporary reign, but one unlimited in its extent, and what would be continued *unto all generations.* The Pſalmiſt, we muſt imagine, to have been tranſported beyond the higheſt flights of the eaſtern poetry, if he could apply ſuch encomiaſtic expreſſions as he here employs to deſcribe, unleſs in a figurative and typical manner, the glory and felicity of the reign of his ſon; and even, with all the latitude that can be allowed to a fervent imagination, indulged by a father's fondneſs for ſuch a ſon as Solomon was, Who but muſt ſay, the picture is inexcuſably overcharged, if drawn literally for him, or any king or ſon of merely human generation. The Pſalmiſt knew too well the

imperfection

imperfection and variableneſs of the beſt human characters, and alſo the inſtability of all human kingdoms, to paint but in fiction their conſtant duration. The heathen and fabulous poets did not feign their *golden age* to laſt longer than the reign of one of their deities.

But how did that of Solomon proſper, and how long did its ſplendour remain? Becauſe he aſked in prayer to God, *not length of days, nor riches, nor the lives of his enemies;* it was granted him to have, agreeably to his petition, an intelligent and extenſive mind, or wiſdom and knowledge, in a ſupereminent degree; and beſides this gift, that worldly wealth beyond what any king in his days ſhould poſſeſs, and a life prolonged, according as he kept the ſtatutes and commandments of God, ſhould be his diſtinguiſhed portion. It was ſo fulfilled; or, if any part of the divine promiſe was with-held, the failure aroſe on Solomon's part. He who had the fame of excelling in wiſdom all the kings that were before him, and, as it is ſaid, any that ſhould come after him, he, to whom the *gold of Sheba* was given in ſuch abundance, as was no where elſe to be ſeen; he who had the honour of erecting and conſecrating a temple to the only living and true God; to put to ſhame all thoſe reared to dumb idols, and to exhibit, by the religious worſhip performed in it, after what manner it was his will to be ſerved: He, I ſay again, this highly favoured king began to fall off from his ſacred allegiance and duty to the Supreme Being, the God of Iſrael, who had exalted him in the manner deſcribed. He was tempted to ſet a value on his political wiſdom, and to prefer it to the divine inſtitutions, which appeared to be narrow and circumſcribed. The vanity of his heart prompted him to think that alliancies might be formed with heathen nations, and, although forbidden, be ſo managed as to diſplay more the grandeur of his reign. He allowed himſelf to forget that this was only a ſecondary object, to be made ſubſervient to the glory of God. While he called around him all and more than the pomp and luxury of other princes, it was perceptible that the brighteſt jewel of his crown, his *famed wiſdom*, had become dim; when he ſet himſelf to

prove the *ways of folly*, as well as he had done thoſe of wiſdom, and to with-hold not his heart from any worldly pleaſure and joy. The experiment was dangerous; and although he thought, by prudential rules, to avoid any evil that might enſue from it, he was caught in the *ſnare*. Therefore, to the honour and memorial of his name, as by general acknowledgment, a wiſe king, and by the tribes of Iſrael, as a ſcriptural and inſpired writer, he had to ſubjoin in the book of *Eccleſiaſtes*, a confeſſion of his errors, and that wiſdom doth not always profit, as it ought to do, him to whom it is given, in a ſuperior degree: Nay, when he ſaid to himſelf, he *would be wiſe*, after the conceit of his own mind; when he believed it a refined piece of policy to admit the toleration of idolatry in Iſrael, he found it not only a deluſion, but juſtly looked upon as the infirmity of his mind in advanced years; and which, along with diſhonour to himſelf, cauſed, alas! by the divine judgment, the detachment of ten of the tribes of Iſrael from *the ſceptre of Judah*.

Here, then, we have to obſerve upon the Pſalmiſt's metaphorical deſcription, conſidered only as predictive of Solomon's happy reign, that where it reſpects temporal good, it was not fulfilled; and that it was never to be his lot, or that of any earthly monarch, that *all other kings ſhould fall down before him, and nations ſerve him*. Even the worldly proſperity that attended this king of *Iſrael*, eminent as it was, underwent a decline before his death; and then had nearly its termination: Where it is ſaid, *His name ſhall endure for ever, and be continued as long as the ſun*; it cannot be underſtood, in the utmoſt latitude of acceptation, to mean that any higher or more laſting honour ſhould follow Solomon's name, than what the other inſpired writers in the books of holy Scripture would attain. But when it is further added, *that men ſhall be bleſſed in him, and all nations ſhall call him bleſſed*, muſt not every attentive reader ſay, 'The 'perſon ſpoken of in ſuch terms as theſe, that approach to the ſtrain 'of *adoration*, muſt be another and incomparably greater than ever 'Solomon was, or any worldly potentate could be, he muſt be that

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'divine perſon and character, in whom, it was promiſed by God to 'Abraham, *that all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed.*' But what is the import of this promiſe, or what kind of happineſs or bleſſing was to be communicated by it? Was it by the enjoyment of outward and bodily good that the nations were to be made happy? In Solomon's reign, every good of this kind was afforded to him and his ſubjects; and yet he, who enjoyed it in the utmoſt extent, wrote upon its whole amount, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* That the nations, if they were to be truly bleſſed, required to have another foundation laid for it, than in that which conſiſted in the indulgence of their ſenſual and unruly paſſions, appeared to be the judgment and voice of reaſon, as well as the doctrine of the ſupernatural revelations early given, and from age to age continued by prophets and inſtructors ſent to the people of *Iſrael.* The frequent captivities into which they were led, and from which they were delivered by the all-powerful arm of God, ſignified that they, and all mankind, having fallen into a ſpiritual bondage by ſin, ſtood in need of, and would obtain a redemption from it, more happy, joyful for them than had been, or could be, experienced from the higheſt decree of outward proſperity. In this deceitful and tranſient glory, Iſrael was not only rivalled, but far ſurpaſſed by other nations of the earth. Under the deluſive deſire of it, they were ſeen to be hoſtile to, and fiercely contend, with one another: But, in the midſt of theſe confuſions, the word of peace and ſalvation was ſounded forth out of Zion, clearer and ſtronger as the day of the promiſed Meſſiah's advent came on. The nature of that ſalvation to be accompliſhed by him, and its extent, were more particularly declared. *Come*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *and ſee the works of God: He ſcattereth them that delight in war, and makes it to ceaſe; that his way may be known, and his ſaving health among the nations. Surely his ſalvation is nigh unto them that fear him; He ſpeaketh peace unto his people and to his ſaints: He ſhall ſpare the poor and the needy, and redeem their ſouls; and precious ſhall their blood be in his ſight.* Pſalm lxvi. & lxvii. *How*

beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publiſheth peace, ſays the prophet Iſaiah, chap. lii. 7. *He ſhall be called Emmanuel, God with us. He ſhall not cry, nor cauſe his voice to be heard in the ſtreets: Yet He ſhall not fail, nor be diſcouraged, till he ſet judgment in the earth: and the iſles ſhall wait for his law.* Iſaiah xlii. 2. He who, by the evangelical prophet, is *ſtyled the root that was to come forth out of the ſtem of Jeſſe, to which as an enſign, the Gentiles were to ſeek and find their reſt glorious*, is deſcribed by Jeremiah by a like metaphor, as the *righteous branch* who was to inſtitute a kingdom of righteouſneſs. In Ezekiel, it is announced, in terms ſimilar to thoſe uſed in the 147th Pſalm, in what manner Jeruſalem, after her deſolation, was to be again built up; not in temporal grandeur, but in ſpiritual felicity. *I will give them*, ſays the Lord God, *one heart, and I will put a new ſpirit within them, that they may walk in my ways.* Chap. xl. In Daniel's viſion, the one *like the Son of Man, being brought near the antient of days*, had a dominion given him that was to continue *for ever;* an earthly one, and *for ever*, is a contradiction! We have, therefore, all reaſon to conclude, that the Pſalmiſt here prophetically ſpeaks of that bleſſed time, which the Scriptures declare to be advancing, when all nations ſhould be made to behold the *great ſalvation* of God wrought for them. Then ſhall the world become like one auguſt temple; in which the pure incenſe of ſpiritual praiſe, honour, and glory, ſhall be offered unto him. The worſhippers of God ſhall then be no more confined to adore him at Jeruſalem, or at any particular place; but worſhip him every where *in ſpirit and truth.* Every family ſhall be a ſanctuary, every houſe a *Bethel*, conſecrated to his holy name: For, it is ſaid, *they ſhall be all taught of God, from the higheſt to the loweſt.* The ſolemn *doxology*, with which the Pſalmiſt concludes, may be conſidered as affixing the ſeal of his faith to all the promiſes of God to his church and people. It was the laſt prayer put up, and penned by him, on his death-bed; but it is not to be taken as ſtanding here in its proper place, according to the *note* adjected by ſome

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tranſcriber. There are many more of his pious ſongs, and devout prayers, which being compoſed long before it, have a ſubſequent place in the ſacred collection.

LECTURE XX.

PSALM LXXIII.

THE Book of Pſalms is not only a treaſure of pure and ſublime devotion, and a beautiful comment on the law of God, but alſo a record of God's ſpecial mercies to Iſrael, and of his favour and loving kindneſs to thoſe who fear his name, and truſt in his word. It contains, beſides, a view of the Pſalmiſt's own conduct, in the various ſituations of adverſity and danger, proſperity and ſucceſs, in which he was placed. This part is the more valuable and inſtructive, as it diſcovers, without colour or diſguiſe, all that he felt upon thoſe different occaſions; and alike faithfully deſcribes both his exertions of virtue, and his failures. In this Pſalm, he ſtates what paſſed in his own mind, on the ſubject of the diſpenſations of Providence; and how he was, at times, affected upon beholding the permitted proſperity and advancement of the wicked. He confeſſes the improper impreſſion it made on his mind; and how it weakened for a while, and almoſt ſubverted his principles of piety and ſubmiſſion to the will of God. It is to be conſidered, that the Pſalmiſt ſuffered much from the perſecutions of impious and wicked men in power, and worldly greatneſs. His trials in this way were hard and ſevere; and therefore he gives, in this Pſalm, a lively deſcription of his feelings and diſtreſs. He ſpeaks, indeed, the language and uſes the arguments of one under perturbation of mind, and diſcontent,

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with the appointments of Providence; and we need go no further than to this, and ſome other Pſalms, to find all the arguments thrown out by the profane and irreligious, againſt the order and juſtice of the divine government. But, in the peruſal of them, we find alſo the propereſt anſwer to them, and the beſt remedy for every ſuch temptation. But I come now to explain the verſes in their order.

VERSE 1. *Truly God is good to Iſrael, even to ſuch as are of a clean heart.*—The Pſalmiſt introduces his ſubject with a general aſſertion, contradictory to all murmurers at the divine diſpenſations, that truly God was good to Iſrael; ſo that, if his ways to this peculiar people were conſidered, it would appear that fatherly love and goodneſs had directed them all; and that even his chaſtiſements of them would be found conducive to their higheſt felicity. How numberleſs, indeed, were the manifeſtations of his favour? how often repeated the proofs of his bounty? How often did he ſpare them, when their ſins deſerved to be viſited with rods? even in the manner that a tender father ſpareth his only child. By his whole procedure to Iſrael, it was evident, that he marked integrity of heart, and pure affections, as the conſtant and invariable object of his love. If, then, the goodneſs and mercy of God was an eſſential attribute of the divine nature, exalted above his other perfections, ſo that the evil and unthankful had reaſon to acknowledge the boundleſs extent of it; how much more might all the true Iſrael of God, characteriſed here by the Pſalmiſt as the pure in heart, extol and celebrate their experience of it, as ſurpaſſing all their praiſe, and all their conceptions? To them gift is added to gift, and grace to grace, out of an inexhauſtible ſtore.

VERSES 2, & 3. *But as for me, my feet were almoſt gone; my ſteps had well nigh ſlipped. For I was envious at the fooliſh, when I ſaw the proſperity of the wicked.*—But, however well founded, in every view of calm reaſon, this aſſurance of the divine goodneſs might

might be, the Pſalmiſt acknowledges, that he had been ſometimes tempted to call in queſtion this great principle of religion, rooted in the hearts of the people of God; and he compares the condition of his mind, then, to that of a perſon who ſtumbles on treacherous and ſlippery ground, that betrays his unwary ſteps. There are certain times, when the juſt views, and the ſervice of God and religion, may be intercepted and darkened even in the beſt diſpoſed minds. And this will be found principally to happen when the ſuggeſtions of our ſelfiſh paſſions are liſtened to and regarded. It is ſurpriſing, then, how men will deceive themſelves, and judge thoſe things perplexed, and out of all order, which appeared plain and regular before. The Pſalmiſt here confeſſes, that envy, that mean and malevolent paſſion, miſled him into theſe unworthy conceptions of the divine adminiſtration, and for which he now condemns himſelf. He forgot, for a moment, that the children of vanity and folly, even when ſet forth in the moſt impoſing light, are really no proper objects of envy, to a rational mind. He conſidered not what they really were in a juſt eſtimate, but only what outwardly their felicity appeared to be; and, when he looked upon it with a carnal eye, he concluded that no condition in the world could be more proſperous and happy. In this paſſionate view of their condition, it ſeemed to him, not only that they had attained a temporary proſperity, but that they were placed out of the reach of all human diſtreſſes. They appeared to him to have no bands in their death; to be neither in terror about their exit, nor to feel for what was paſt, or to come in awful futurity. Therefore they kept their ſpirits to the laſt; and, in general, might be ſaid to be exempted from many vexations and troubles that other men, far better than they, endure. This picture of the proſperity of the wicked, which the Pſalmiſt draws, is overcharged; a fictitious one, it may be called, ſuch as his mind, now moved with envy and indignation, repreſented to him. But we ſhall for a moment grant, contrary to what is true, and generally obſerved among mankind, that the wicked may live and die in the manner he here ſuppoſes; yet it will not follow that

they

they are to be envied. Are they to be envied? becauſe the finer feelings of the human ſoul, ſuch as religion and virtue inſpire, are extinguiſhed in them; becauſe, unaffected with calamity themſelves, they knew no ſympathy with their fellow creatures in the body; and becauſe, broke looſe from the common ties of reaſon and humanity, they exerciſed no proper affection, or diſcharged any duty either to God or man. It is ſo ordered in the plan of his Providence, that much of human excellence and virtue ſhould ariſe from what we peeviſhly call diſtreſs and trouble, he is therefore ſaid in faithfulneſs to afflict his people; and that, if we are without chaſtiſement, we are then claſſed among the ungodly, and are as baſtards, and not ſons.

VERSE 6. *Therefore pride compaſſeth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.*—What the Pſalmiſt here adds concerning the character of the proſperous and wicked in the world, appears to confirm what has been juſt now ſaid. Having no proper diſcipline from affliction, pride ariſes in their hearts. It takes hold of their whole frame, and may be ſaid to encompaſs them about as a chain, to rule and govern all their thoughts and actions, and to prompt them to violence, which ſeems fitted to them like a garment. There are many ſuch children of pride in the world; but how many more would there be, if God did not put the curb of adverſity upon them, and make them know themſelves to be but men. How would their eyes, as the Pſalmiſt ſays, ſtand out, and throw diſdainful looks on all around them; when in the midſt of their ſurfeit of proſperity, they have more than their hearts can wiſh. Poverty is often dreaded and complained of as a great evil: But it may be reckoned a happy ſtate, compared to that in which men have more than their hearts can deſire. When beſet with ſurrounding pleaſures, the reliſh of them is generally loſt; and the ſuperfluity is found not to promote, but to mar their enjoyment. *Give me, therefore*, ſaid Hagar, *neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me.*

VERSE

VERSE 8. *They are corrupt, and ſpeak wickedly concerning oppreſſion: they ſpeak loftily.*—In theſe verſes, the Pſalmiſt intimates that the ungodly, in proſperity, do not only ſin privately, by pride of heart, and by exceſs, and by an abuſe of the mercies of heaven; but they go farther, by giving vent to their immoral and impious principles. They adopt a ſet of opinions conformable to their pride, which prompts them to contemn their fellow men on earth, and blaſpheme heaven. It may be truly ſaid, my brethren, that what men call their ſpeculations, their rational diſquiſitions, and their refined inquiries, are often no more than ſtrained pleadings in behalf of their paſſions, or ſtudied apologies for the peculiar caſt and temper of their minds. It ſeldom or almoſt never happens, that men ſeek for truth, without wiſhing and endeavouring to turn it to their particular aim and purpoſe. To ſome it appears a bold thing, a mark of intrepid ſpirit, to challenge the ways of God, to arraign his procedure, or to deny his being and perfections, and therefore they ſet their mouths *againſt the heavens*: So the weak, or jaundiſed eye, is offended with the light of the ſkies: That which beautifies and cheers all nature, is complained of as diſagreeable and diſturbing to them. Men loſt to a ſenſe of God's ſupreme government in the world, and ſuch as do not think of it with ſatisfaction, wi[illegible] to confound all principles of religion and truth, impugn all evidences and diſcoveries of the divine will, whether of nature or grace, and reduce every thing to the low ſtandard of their conceptions: Yet not more wiſe than the ignorant part of mankind, who meaſure the heavenly bodies with their natural eye, and believe the ſun and moon in the firmament to be no larger than they appear to be, thoſe impious men would judge and determine concerning the whole ſyſtem of things, moral and divine, by their partial and narrow views, and which are ever perverted by their prejudices and paſſions. But though, as the Pſalmiſt ſa[illegible]s, they be loud and dictatorial in their tone, and their tongues walk through the earth, their pretence to ſuperior knowledge and diſcernment, ought not to be admitted, and much leſs ought pious minds to

be ſtumbled with their doctrines. Here, in this ſtate, it is enough that men ſee part of the ways of God, and perceive the great lines of his government, as conſiſtent with righteouſneſs, juſtice, and truth. It is enough that we are taught, by the light of reaſon and revelation, the ſum of our duty, and what is required of us: We can never err, or be miſtaken, while we ſtudy to do juſtice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God: Nay, my brethren, it will be every man's beſt comfort, every man's true joy, at leaſt more than he can find in all the pretended wiſdom of the world, that he has entertained thoſe principles, and ſtudied to act that part which has teſtified adoration, love, and obedience to his Creator and bountiful benefactor, to God the author of all his mercies. Every good and well diſpoſed mind will alſo derive the higheſt ſatisfaction from the perſuaſion, that the ſame God, who gives to men all things they enjoy pertaining to life and well-being in this world, is alſo the author of more excellent and enduring bleſſings; and that he hath made himſelf known as the father of their ſpirits, and graciouſly provided for their immortal felicity. The knowledge of his holy covenant for this end and purpoſe, and of his appointment of a Redeemer and Saviour to them from ſin and death, and of his ſending forth a ſpirit of power to reform and purify their hearts and minds; the knowledge of this ſyſtem of mercy and grace, I ſay, will happily become a ſource of the moſt exalted joy, and enforce, in a peculiar manner, all their obligations to duty and obedience. The lovers of God will account this revelation acceptable in the higheſt degree: They will deſire to breathe its ſpirit, and to be perfected by it in love to God and to man; to have the narrowneſs and contraction of their hearts cured; their attachment to the things of ſenſe relaxed; their carnal prejudices, and their worldly paſſions and purſuits, abated, or wholly ſubdued by means of that clear light, which God has commanded to ſhine as the day ſpring from on high, to guide his people in the way of peace, that they may know how to ſerve him in righteouſneſs and holineſs all the days of their appointed time.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXI.

PSALM LXXIII. Continued.

VERSES 16, & 17. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the ſanctuary of God: then underſtood I their end.*

IN theſe words, the Pſalmiſt declares that he end avoured in vain to find a ſolution for his doubts and perplexities about the diſpenſations of providence in the light of his natural reaſon. The difficulties of the ſubject could not be cleared, nor his diſquieting thoughts compoſed by any inquiry or diſcuſſion he could form with reſpect to it. He even found the argument not only too high, but painful to him. It ſerved to multiply his doubts, and increaſe his perturbation. And ſo it happens to the narrow mind of man, when it would ſtretch itſelf beyond its ſphere, and pretend to judge concerning the plan and counſels of infinite wiſdom. How many times have men wearied themſelves, and run into a labyrinth of perplexity and error, by pretending to be wiſe beyond what is given them to know in this dark and imperfect ſtate; and how much better would it be to abandon theſe inquiries, than to render them the ſource of diſquiet and gloomy reflections, either to themſelves or to mankind. The Pſalmiſt found there was no end of his perplexity, until he went into the ſanctuary of God, *i. e.* until he recollected thoſe views which God had given him of his moral perfections in his ſanctuary. Then, ſays he, I underſtood the unerring wiſdom of the divine government,

and that a wiſe end was ſerved by the temporary proſperity of the wicked. It is certain, that without the diſcovery God hath made of himſelf, by divine revelation, the mind of man would fluctuate in endleſs doubts, and be toſſed for ever with uncertainty. But when the great principle of his being and attributes is once admitted, when men are acquainted with the image he hath drawn of himſelf in his word, they find all the falſe conceptions of their minds about his adminiſtration vaniſh at once; a juſt faith and confidence ariſes in the mind, that as he is perfect in himſelf, ſo he is ever holy, juſt, and true in all his ways; that he who created all things, and preſides over all things, will ever do that which is right; and that, though to us darkneſs may appear to ſurround his throne, yet juſtice, mercy, and faithfulneſs have their habitation there.

VERSE 18. *Surely thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places: thou caſtedſt them down into deſtruction.*—When the Pſalmiſt obſerved the proſperity of the wicked only with the carnal eye, and as men in general uſually behold it, he imagined it to have a foundation as ſtrong as they themſelves believed it to be. It ſeemed to him, that it was proof againſt adverſity, and could not be ſhaken. But behold here, how, on better conſideration, he corrects himſelf. The ſcene changes in his view; the proſperous wicked are no more what he repreſented them to be, firm in their ſtrength, and ſecure from overthrow and calamity: On the contrary, he declares them placed on fallacious and ſlippery ground; ground apt to give way of itſelf, or, from its towering height, calculated to render thoſe giddy who were mounted upon it. Such is the boaſted ſtate of the fools of this world. Their exaltation, alas! only precipitates their fall, and renders it more ſignal and confounding to them. They are ſeen to deſcend rapidly from it, like all thoſe whom the proſperity of fools has deſtroyed. *How are they*, adds he, *brought into deſolation, as in a moment! they are utterly conſumed with terrors.* Theſe terrors are peculiar to their condition, and are ſuch as ariſe from the iniquities they have committed.

mitted. Like Babylon that was exalted, and abuſed her felicity, they have a proportionable meaſure of pain and ſorrow given them. Rev. xviii. 7. Then alſo it is proved, how fantaſtic and imaginary their felicity was, having no more ſolid ingredients of happineſs in it, than a dream has of real objects. So that even to men of common ſenſe, and ordinary reflection, it may appear deſpicable; and how much more muſt it be accounted ſuch by the Supreme Being, when he manifeſts his moral and righteous judgments; when, in another ſtate, every form of excellence, but that which is moral and ſpiritual, ſhall be rejected by him, and faith, and truth, and virtue alone be exalted.

VERSES 20, & 21. *As a dream when one awaketh; ſo, O Lord, when thou awakeſt thou ſhalt deſpiſe their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.*—The Pſalmiſt here expreſſes the uneaſy ſituation of his mind; when he gave himſelf up to the ſuggeſtions of envy, and entertained thoſe unbecoming thoughts of the divine adminiſtration, a double diſtreſs ſeized him. His heart ſwelled with indignant paſſion; while a conſciouſneſs of the weakneſs into which he had fallen, and the diſcovery he made of his own ignorance, oppreſſed his mind. In this ſtate, he perceived himſelf to be no better than an irrational creature, or a beaſt, before God. All the faculties of his ſoul were now locked up; ſo that he could exert none of them, as he had formerly done, for his own comfort, or the praiſe and honour of God: And ſuch is the unhappy condition to which pride of heart reduces men, when, through impatience, they fret and murmur at the diſpenſations of providence. If God's ways are, in any meaſure, to be learned by them, it muſt be by preſerving their minds from the influence of paſſion: A paſſionate reaſoner, or an impatient inquirer, is never found to ſucceed on any ſubject. How ill, then, muſt this temper correſpond with inveſtigations about the principles of religion, or a rational ſearch into the hidden myſteries of the divine government.

VERSES

VERSES 23, & 24. *Nevertheleſs, I am continually with thee: thou haſt holden me by my right hand. Thou ſhalt guide me with thy counſel, and afterward receive me to glory.*—In theſe words, the Pſalmiſt confeſſes that he might have juſtly forfeited the favour of God, and been, in diſpleaſure, removed from his ſanctuary, on account, not of the weakneſs and errors of his underſtanding upon a ſubject ſo involved in difficulties, but his giving way to a fretful and ſullen temper, as if, becauſe the ways of providence diſpleaſed him, he thought it became him to be diſcontented: 'Yet, notwithſtanding this moſt 'offenſive behaviour, adds the Pſalmiſt, my gracious God hath not 'dealt with me according to my demerit: Nay, he hath treated me 'as a father doth his froward child, who, if not held faſt by the 'hand, would, by a haſty ſwing, throw himſelf into the utmoſt dan-'ger. In this manner have I been ſaved by a God of mercy, and 'looked upon with an eye of pity in the midſt of my tranſgreſſion. 'Hear this all ye who have any title to be called the children of his 'houſe, and ſay, whether your earthly parents can more tenderly 'and ſo effectually watch and care for your ſafety. I am, as before, 'placed under his ſpecial protection; and, while I wait at the door 'of his tabernacle, have acceſs to hear the counſels of his wiſdom 'and grace. It was becauſe I ſuffered myſelf to fall into the ſin of 'the ungodly, by a diſtruſt of them, that I was juſtly given up to 'blindneſs and darkneſs of mind. But now, my God hath made 'the light of his holy and righteous law to ariſe upon my mind; 'and I confide in his all-ſufficient grace to be guided by it: And 'who, indeed, can think of the benefits that reſult from conformity 'to it, and not ſay, from the heart, that they are above all others 'precious, and no leſs productive of delight and joy. In this life 'they are found the only ſure path to happineſs and peace; and, 'what is far more, they lead to, and open the gate of, unfading feli-'city and glory in the immortal one that is to come.'

VERSES 25, & 26. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there*

is

is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.— It may be, with all reason, affirmed, that even those who but slightly cast their eyes upon the compositions of the Psalmist must perceive them to be marked with a spirit of piety and devotion more than human; and that, from the feelings of his heart, he expresses his sentiments of God and things spiritual and divine. Dull, indeed, and insensible to these subjects, must such souls be pronounced, who can read the sacred text, and yet receive from it no suitable impression. Spiritual objects, or religious sentiments, do not, indeed, strike us so immediately, or, at first, so forcibly as those of the corporeal senses, or of the worldly kind. In order to be duly impressed with the former, we must recal them often to the view of our minds. In proportion as we become, by frequent meditation, conversant with them, their influence over us will be found to increase, and that of the others to decline. The soul, convinced of their superior excellence, of their far greater importance, and more durable nature, prefers them in estimation to sensible objects, embraces them with more delight, and cherishes them with more joy, than can ever be found in the attainment of all the wealth and prosperity the world can afford. Where the love of the Deity, and his holy laws, is thus kindled in the mind, it stands alone in place of all other desires: Nay, the Psalmist appears to consider the splendour and serenity of the visible heavens, so attracting and engaging to human eyes, that every star was believed, in the heathen world, to be a God, as representing no object of rational delight, unless so far as its contemplation held forth the being and perfections of an one only eternal, and, to mortal sight, invisible Deity; and whom souls, enlightened and converted by his revealed word, know that, *as their love to him is, in a high degree, excited, so they are, and will be, ever beloved of him.* If on earth, in human connections, and upon worldly principles, we think to meet with objects or persons to whom the chief love of our souls may be directed, there will be experienced a deficiency, an inconstancy,

ſtancy, and diſappointment in the beſt of them all. In this mortal life, it is no more given us to find entire or undiſturbed complacency in the exertion of our deſires, than to obtain perfect happineſs in the gratification of them. By this divine appointment, men are taught and induced to ſeek for their ſovereign good in intercourſe with the Father of their ſpirits, who, ſays the Pſalmiſt, verſe 26, *when he felt his fleſh and heart to fail*, both his outward and inward man to be in a weak and diſcompoſed condition, *would prove the ſtrength of his heart, and his portion for ever.* How often it was verified to him, that God was the reviver of his ſpirits when ſinking under a variety of troubles, many paſſages in his Pſalmody bear witneſs; and they teſtify no leſs with what inceſſancy and fervour of affection his ſoul aſpired after communion with God. His language flows upon this ſubject in ſuch a ſtrain, as proves it to come warm and genuine from the heart. The metaphors he ſometimes uſes are not ſtrained, but appoſite and natural. *My ſoul longeth*, ſays he, *yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my fleſh crieth out for the living God. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God. My ſoul thirſteth for the living God: when ſhall I come and appear before him.* Pſalm lxxxiv. 2. & xlii. 1, & 2.

VERSES 27, & 28. *For lo, they that are far from thee ſhall periſh: thou haſt deſtroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my truſt in the Lord, that I may declare all thy works.*—Whatſoever ſpiritual counſel, ſupport, and enlivening grace, thoſe who are devoted to thy honour, O my God, ſhall find, whatever comfort in life, or hope in death, be their portion, ſuch as know thee not as the fountain of ſpiritual light and life, can have no ſhare in theſe bleſſings, *as they deſire not the knowledge of thee, and of thy ways*, but have made the world, and the things of it, the idol of their hearts, they ſhall never find what they have not affected or ſought after. Fly far from them, as they

do

they do from thee, ſhall every ray of comfort; and in that day wherein they have moſt need of it, *all their hopes ſhall periſh; their names being blotted out of the book of life.* And, if ſuch be the fate of them, who have ſuffered themſelves to be captivated with, and wholly engroſſed in the love of the tranſient good of this world, and who may be reckoned to have periſhed for *lack of better counſel*, and their deſpiſing it, What muſt be the doom of thoſe, who, having lived under the light of the divine ſanctuary in Iſrael, had acceſs to know the Deity, as revealed to them both in his word and in his works, yet revolted from his worſhip and ſervice, and, in preference, embraced that of the heathen idols or demons? Upon them, ſays the Pſalmiſt, the ſentence of condemnation is already paſſed; and they may be conſidered as given up by it to immediate wrath, and ſuch ſignal and everlaſting deſtruction as is due to, and will be inflicted upon, the avowed and decided haters and enemies of the Almighty God of Iſrael. Hear this, all ye who either make light of the knowledge of him, or ſay in your heart, you chooſe not him, or his law, to have authority or dominion over you. But as for me, adds the Pſalmiſt, I place my ſafety and true good in drawing near to him in the way appointed in his bleſſed word. It affords a ground of hope and truſt in his mercy and goodneſs, that neither I, or any true ſervant of his, ſhall *ſeek his face in vain*: Nay, I will go farther, and ſay, that ſuch favour will attend every one of this character; and, ſo far as it may conſiſt with the glory of God, it ſhall be given him, not only to reap ſpiritual benefit to his own ſoul, but, by his inſtruction and example, to adminiſter a ſhare of it to others. Have we not reaſon to acknowledge, that the Pſalmiſt ſtands high in the eſtimate of his miniſtrations in the tabernacle of God; when we conſider what a variety of well choſen arguments are collected in his book for the being and providence of the Deity, and in vindication of his moral government, in the diſplay of the truth, rectitude, and holineſs of his laws, in the engaging and powerful motives ſuggeſted for the due and conſtant adoration and praiſe of the Lord of heaven and earth, May we not

be allowed to ſay, upon the whole, that he gives a demonſtration not only of the truth of religion, but of the *power of godlineſs*, to operate ſo in the human ſoul, and that upon its principles and ſpirit alone, a ſanctified one will ſtand unſhaken and comforted in the midſt of all outward calamities and troubles; and of this the Pſalmiſt, notwithſtanding the frequent ſtatement of his doubts and fears, muſt be allowed to be ſet forth in the chequered ſcene of his life, as a very ſtriking and ſignal example. So that every true ſervant of his, though he walk in the midſt of trouble, may ſay with the Pſalmiſt here, *Nevertheleſs, I am continually with thee; thou haſt holden me by my right hand. Thou ſhalt guide me by thy counſel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

LECTURE XXII.

PSALM LXXVI.

AMONG all the advantages Iſrael enjoyed as a people, the Pſalmiſt conſiders the manifeſtations God had made of himſelf among them as the firſt and the greateſt. He counts it the chief felicity and glory of Judah and Jeruſalem, that God's name was known there, his wiſdom, power, and righteouſneſs diſplayed in a manner far more conſpicuous and diſtinguiſhing, than any other nation was acquainted with; for there his law and teſtimony were unfolded. There his tabernacle, with all the ſymbols of his gracious preſence, and of his covenant, was eſtabliſhed, and Mount Zion was declared to be his holy habitation. The reiteration of the Pſalmiſt's expreſſion on the ſubject may be remarked as a great poetic beauty. Converſant

verſant in thoſe ſtrains of praiſe, which were dedicated to the honour of God, he knew how to give them true elevation, without the uſe of pompous and ſwelling words. Of this elegantly ſublime ſimplicity, the book of the Pſalms affords many examples; and there need not be any more ſtriking one given, than what is here ſubjoined in the 2d verſe, where the Pſalmiſt deſcribes, in one emphatic ſentence, the ſudden and complete overthrow of the enemies of Iſrael. *There brake he the arrows of the bow, the ſhield, and the ſword, and the battle.* All the weapons, all the armour, all the array of this adverſe hoſt, though a combination of the ſtrength and ſkill of man, are repreſented as broken and cruſhed down in a moment by the mighty hand of the God of Jacob. How often was this ſpectacle ſeen in the courſe of Iſrael's conflicts with their many ſurrounding enemies. How often were they not only ſaved, but rendered victorious, though but a ſmall band, a handful compared to the number of thoſe with whom they contended. If we have at any time ſeen and admired the ſplendid ſhow that is made of the power of man, when the armies of nations are drawn out into the field, we ought to call to mind how often and ſuddenly the ſad reverſe of their pride is ſeen; when, inſtead of victory, an overthrow enſues, and the will of heaven is, with reſpect to them, that the arrows of the bow, and other engines of war, ſhould be broken in pieces.

VERSE 4. *Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey* —The common hope of thoſe who are muſtered up in the field is the plunder they are to obtain; the ſpoils they are to ſeize; and the mountains of prey they expect to find. The proud conquerors of the earth are known to have carried the ſpoils of their enemies in triumph, and to have made a public and pompous proceſſion into their cities, with the arms, the enſigns, the furniture, and riches of the vanquiſhed. But the Pſalmiſt conſidered all theſe, however deſirable in the eyes of men, as too mean and contemptible to be made the ſubject of his boaſt, or the theme of his ſacred ſong. If

there was any thing deſerving attention in them, it was, that God had aſſigned theſe trophies of victory to Iſrael, who had, therefore, reaſon to revere and honour him as far more glorious and excellent, than mountains of prey, or the greateſt pile that could be formed of worldly wealth and riches. If God has not always aſſigned a ſhare of theſe to his people, if, on the contrary, they have been left deſtitute of theſe ſuperfluities which the proud enjoy, it becomes them to be ſatisfied, nay, to deſpiſe thoſe gifts, which are no ſure tokens of his favour. It becomes them ever to conſider that their gracious benefactor has provided far better for them, by giving them to know him, whom to know is life eternal, by engaging them to the love and contemplation of himſelf, as a perpetual ſource of happineſs and joy.

VERSE 5. *The ſtout-hearted are ſpoiled; they have ſlept their ſleep; and none of the men of might have found their hands.*—The Pſalmiſt, in theſe well choſen and expreſſive terms, again brings to view the ſad cataſtrophe that had befallen the adverſaries of Iſrael. In the 3d verſe, he had deſcribed them ſtruck with confuſion in the field. Here he paints them as proſtrated on the ground; and you may obſerve that he does it, not like a boaſtful conqueror, or one inſenſible to the calamities of others. He takes occaſion to moralize on the affecting ſubject, and to reflect on the diſappointed aims, and baffled ambition of vain glorious men. Alas, ſays he, what avails all the parade of their ſtrength, and the ſhow of courage made by them: One common fate now involves the brave and the timid, the ſtrong and the weak. As they could not, by any effort, prevent their overthrow, ſo now they cannot recover from the fatal blow. This he declares to have been given by the interpoſing power of God. To the word ſpoken by him, he aſcribes all the honour of the victory: *At thy rebuke both the chariot and horſe are caſt into a dead ſleep.* So God is ſaid, by his voice, to ſtill the noiſe of the ſeas, the noiſe of their waves, and the tumult of the people. He improves this conſideration of the irreſiſtible power of God into a general argument for

for Iſrael, and all nations of men, to fear him, and dread his diſpleaſure and indignation.

VERSE 7. *Thou, even thou, art to be feared, and who may ſtand in thy ſight when once thou art angry?*—As if all other ideas of power were vain illuſions, and that of God only to be kept in view. The Pſalmiſt further extends his contemplation on this awful ſcene that had paſſed, and views it in the light of a judgment that God had commanded from heaven, the reſidence of his throne of power and glory. There he is known to weigh the actions of men in the balance of his juſtice, and to render to them the recompenſe of their ways. There he ſways a ſceptre of dominion that reaches over all the earth, which trembles and becomes ſtill or dead with fear, when he ariſes to execute his judgments. One great object of theſe judgments is declared to be the ſaving the meek of the earth; a title given to his ſaints who live under another law than that which prevails among the ungodly and abandoned part of mankind, and who are eſpecially diſtinguiſhed from them by the government they have over every turbulent paſſion, and by the gentle, benevolent, and peaceable frame of their hearts. All ſuch, it is declared, that God will ſave from the ſtrife of tongues, and the pride of men; from the open aſſaults and malicious devices of their enemies: Save them he will, not only by a temporary deliverance, but by an eternal redemption from death and the grave, and from all their carnal and ſpiritual enemies.

VERSE 10. *Surely the wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee: the remainder of wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain.*—There is a truth, ſays the Pſalmiſt, worthy of our attention upon the ſubject we are now conſidering; and it is this: It may appear, upon a ſuperficial view of the turbulent events that paſs in the world, and eſpecially upon obſerving the licence given to the outrageous paſſions of men, that there is no order taken in providence with reſpect to them, and no bounds ſet to their pernicious effects. This, indeed, is the thought with which impious

impious and wicked men endeavour to comfort themſelves. They believe that if the power of doing miſchief is given them, they may uſe it with impunity, and without reſtraint. But the religious and the good have a very different ſentiment: They underſtand and know, that, though the violent paſſions of men, evil and odious in themſelves, cannot, as the Apoſtle Paul ſays, in a proper ſenſe, work the righteouſneſs or the praiſe of God; yet, under the controul and direction of the wiſe and juſt ruler of all things, they may be rendered finally ſubſervient to his honour and glory: And this, ſays the Pſalmiſt, is firſt apparent, from obſerving that there is a limit ſet to all the rage of man, beyond which it is not permitted to go. However ſtrong the propenſity of wicked and violent men may be to continue their fury, and to ſpread deſtruction, however induſtriouſly prepared and armed with outward power for the purpoſe, how often, nay generally, is a ſtop put to the enterpriſe, and in the day in which they moſt magnify themſelves, the thoughts of their heart, the deſigns of their ambitition, of their revenge, or their cruelty, are ſeen at once to periſh. Men around them, who think as they do, are ſtruck with ſurpriſe, and learn to dread the interpoſition of the ſupreme diſpoſer of all things; while the religious behold the arm of his power ſtretched forth in a ſignal manner, and ſay unto God, with the Pſalmiſt, *the remainder of wrath haſt thou reſtrained.* It is not only in this way that mens ſinful paſſions are made, by the check given them, to miniſter to the divine praiſe; but alſo by their being ſo overruled as to produce very different effects from what was intended by their wicked votaries. While they mean to hurt and to deſtroy cities and nations, it is in the will of God to heal their infirmities, and to build them up. Theſe ravagers of the world are made ſcourges in his hand to correct and chaſtiſe their errors and defects. They are employed as rods of his anger, like the ſtorms and the tempeſts in the natural world, to puniſh iniquity and ſin in a certain degree; but when they would exceed their commiſſion, they are broken in pieces, and thrown into the fire. It is by beholding the evil of

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ſinful paſſions in the extreme, that men are made the more to hate and abhor it. Even in common life, the ſight of a perſon under the tranſport of raging anger, or unruly luſt, is ſufficient to impreſs our minds with a deteſtation of it. We ſee the tranſgreſſor darkened, deformed, and, as it were, puniſhed in his offenſive act. But let us remember, that though others may be made wiſer and better by ſuch a view of ſin, yet the guilt of it lies undiminiſhed upon the head of the tranſgreſſor. If his iniquity is turned to any good, it is of the divine wiſdom and grace that it is ſo ordered. Judged he muſt be, according to the depravity found in his heart, and according to his will and intention of evil. His purpoſe may be defeated or not followed with all the diſmal conſequences that were to be expected: But vain will be the comfort any unprincipled tranſgreſſor would aſſume to himſelf from this circumſtance. His conſcience will tell him, *Thou art the man* in whoſe heart the evil thought has not only ariſen, but been approved and cheriſhed. Think not, then, that in the judgment of God, the ſearcher of hearts, that thou canſt ſtand acquitted: Even in that of men, he who is known to be of a dark mind, and diſpoſed to corrupt and malevolent devices, although they be not brought forth into acts, and therefore cannot come under the cognizance of human laws, juſtly becomes the object of general hatred, or, at leaſt, his company is avoided as dangerous. He is left alone to brood over his perverſe and gloomy thoughts: And if this be a puniſhment to him; let us who feel ourſelves to be otherwiſe affected, and have a ſenſe of religious and moral duty, think often how miſerable the condition of thoſe muſt be, who are forſaken of God, and left to themſelves, *to eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.*

LECTURE

LECTURE XXIII.

PSALM LXXVII.

VERSE 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me.*

THERE is nothing more natural to a mind in trouble than to ſeek to utter its hidden grief, or to expreſs its ſenſation of quick and agonizing pain. Nature has lent a particular tone of woe to all animals in diſtreſs; which is not only intelligible to their own tribe, but, in ſome degree, ſtrikes thoſe of a different ſpecies. But when man mourns over any calamity, he is not only capable of raiſing his cry unto his fellow-creatures, but of addreſſing it to the author of his being, to the maker and ruler of heaven and earth, who has the ordering of all events. There is not a man poſſeſſed of reaſon and reflexion, who ſuffers in extremity, but naturally embraces the thought and perſuaſion of the exiſtence of an all controuling power, that may deliver him. But it is religion only that points out this all-ſufficient refuge, and inſpires the hope of the deſired deliverance. It is a ſoul acquainted, as the Pſalmiſt's was, with God, conſcious of its dependence upon him, and convinced, from mercies daily received, of his all-gracious and protecting power, that is led to pour out its complaint with fervency before him; and not only ſo, but has the ſatisfaction and comfort of knowing that its faithful prayer will be attended to, and graciouſly heard by him. How different

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is this condition of every religious and every godly mind, from that of many in the world; who, when agitated with trouble, have none but ſecondary means, or men weak like themſelves, to which they can fly. As well may they raiſe their cry to the rocks, or to the winds that howl in the deſart, than to ſuch incompetent, and often ill diſpoſed inſtruments of their deliverance. But the Iſrael of God are aſſured from his word, that he deſpiſes not, but regards the *affliction of the afflicted;* that he numbers their tears; and that in ſix, yea, in ſeven troubles, he will be nigh unto them.

VERSE 2. *In the day of my trouble I ſought the Lord; my ſore ran in the night, and ceaſed not: my ſoul refuſed to be comforted.*—However diſtant mens thoughts may be from God and religion in the day of proſperity, that of adverſity works a change in their ſentiments, and draws their hearts off the world, and its periſhing enjoyments unto God. They perceive that there is no ſafety from trouble then, no hope of alleviating it, no view of bearing or ſurmounting its hard preſſure, but what the comfortable thoughts of God and his divine perfections, and a reliance on his merciful promiſes, inſpire. When bereft of this happy ſupport, human grief can do nothing but ſuggeſt the moſt melancholy thoughts, brood over its pain, and night and day count all its ſores. Then is afflicted man reduced to the ſituation, which the Pſalmiſt here deſcribes, when he ſays, *his ſoul refuſed to be comforted.* Theſe palliatives of diſtreſs, which he had ſometimes applied to, were now, in deſpondency, rejected by him. It ſeems, by the latter clauſe of this verſe, that the Pſalmiſt not only means that all temporal comforts, ſuch as the uſe of ſuſtenance, and of the mitigations of pain, and the conſoling converſe of friends, were now deemed inſignificant, and renounced by him; but that he alſo feared religion itſelf could not afford the neceſſary conſolations to him. It is thus that men, when, for a moment, diſtruſtful of God, are made to ſuffer the awful viſitation of deſpair: Since they may be then ſaid virtually to deny that God is their rock and their

ſalvation, it is no wonder that the light of his countenance ſhould be withdrawn, and all their ſorrows be multiplied to them.

VERSE 3. *I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my ſpirit was overwhelmed. Selah.*—It appears, from theſe words, that the Pſalmiſt began to recollect himſelf, and turn his thoughts again to thoſe views of God, which had ſo often cheered his ſoul. But he found they were not yet open to him. His mind, that had been darkened, retained ſo much of the ſhade, that inſtead of finding joy in the *remembrance of God*, *he was troubled.* This would ariſe from the agitated ſtate of his mind, which rendered him unfit to correſpond with him, who is the God of order, and the father of light, *in whom there is no darkneſs at all.* It might ariſe, alſo, from the ſhame and remorſe that he felt for his ſinful diſtruſt of his all-ſufficient protector. He, therefore, could not ſupport himſelf upon the former grounds of his faith. He gave way to complaint; *and his ſpirit was overwhelmed.* He then enters into a detail of his diſtreſs in the following 4th verſe. He ſpeaks of his ſuffering, by want of reſt in the night, and continual vigilance, which tended to weaken him ſo, that he could not ſpeak. He endeavoured to recollect, verſe 5th, whether any one among the number of God's people, in antient times, had been ſo afflicted as he was. He called to mind his former cheerful ſtrains to the praiſe and honour of God. He reaſoned with himſelf on the ſubject of his grief, and on the cauſe of God's ſevere dealing with him. But he could find no tranquillity of ſpirit. *While he thus muſed, the fire burned in his breaſt;* and he only found himſelf diſpoſed to vent his complaint in theſe words of impatience, as you read in continuance from the 7th verſe to the 10th. Upon another occaſion, ſimilar to this, the Pſalmiſt ſays, that *he was dumb, and opened not his mouth; becauſe God did it:* And until we are brought to this ſubmiſſive temper under affliction, until we ſay it is the will of the Lord, and let it be done; our diſtreſs may be juſtly aggravated, and a heavier rod ſtretched over us. Sin

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and tranſgreſſion is a ſufficient cauſe for our ſuffering; and we cannot rightly judge of the degree and meaſure of the chaſtiſement neceſſary for the renovation of our hearts. It becomes us to refer this unto God; and we ſhall find cauſe to ſay, *that in faithfulneſs he hath afflicted us.*

VERSE 10. *And I ſaid, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Moſt High.*—After all the agitation of ſpirit into which the Pſalmiſt was thrown, by his ſore diſtreſs, his melancholy reflections upon it, and his doubts with reſpect to his deliverance, he ſtops ſhort in the midſt of his complaints, and freely confeſſes, that it was weakneſs and infirmity that made him expreſs himſelf in the manner he had done. He was conſcious, that there was more of impatience, of paſſion, and perplexity, in what he had advanced, than of juſt argument. In how many inſtances does this happen to men, to ſubſtitute the ſuggeſtions of ſelf-love, pride, or paſſion, for the dictates of reaſon; and not only to plead them for a while, as the Pſalmiſt did, but to adhere to them, and maintain them as true. There is nothing more proper and neceſſary, in the government of ourſelves, than to know, and remember, that we are weak creatures, of limited faculties, and fallible underſtandings, eſpecially when we would pretend to ſcan the ways of God, and challenge the procedure of his providence. It is then to be ſuſpected, that, when we think ourſelves beſt founded in reaſon, we are fartheſt in the wrong; and that our arguments are the deluſions of fancy, and partake of the infirmity of our conſtitution: For man, who is but of yeſterday, and his life of ſhort duration, can never comprehend the immenſity of the divine works. *The ways of God are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.* But the Pſalmiſt adds, *I will remember the years of the right hand of the Moſt High.* In time of trouble, men are apt to forget that God has ever been gracious. Even though his former diſpenſations have been a ſcene of miracles and mercies, ſuch as Iſrael beheld in Egypt, one day of

calamity and diſtreſs is ſufficient to blot out the memory of them from ungrateful minds. Yet the truly pious and good will ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits.* Nay, when adverſity, and the rod of chaſtiſement, is ſent, then is the time to call to mind his former goodneſs; to conſider what grounds he has given to his people to truſt in him at all times, on account of the mercies they have received, his providential interpoſitions in their behalf, and the wonderful deliverances wrought for them. Theſe are what the Pſalmiſt calls *the years of the right hand of the Moſt High;* when God, the protector of Iſrael, was ſeen reſcuing them from their ſufferings with a mighty hand, and an outſtretched arm. And unleſs, my brethren, we thus look back, and reflect on what God has done for us, we ſhall be overtaken with doubts and deſpondency in the day of trouble. Therefore, ſays the Pſalmiſt,

VERSES 11, & 12. *I will remember the works of the Lord: ſurely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate alſo of all thy works, and talk of thy doings.*—When the Pſalmiſt expreſſed himſelf in this manner, his heart was relieved from its burden, and the dark cloud that hung over his mind was diſpelled. His mind, now emerged into light, reſumed its rational and pleaſant function of recollecting, admiring, and adoring the marvellous works of God. He found now the delight and joy that attended the ſtudy of them. It made him alive, and ſenſible to a thouſand happy thoughts and impreſſions, which, for a ſeaſon, had been loſt to him. But now he reſolves to dwell on the agreeable ſubject, and to purſue it, as his daily ſtudy and meditation. While he exerciſed his mind with it, there was no danger of his ſoul being darkened, and becoming a prey to dread and fear. Nay, he would be borne up, on the wing of contemplation, above all ſuch unworthy apprehenſions as he had given way to; and he would be confirmed and eſtabliſhed in the belief, that all things are wiſely and juſtly ordered by him, whoſe unerring

unerring knowledge, faithfulneſs, and truth, are diſplayed in every part of his creation.

LECTURE XXIV.

PSALM LXXVIII.

VERSES 1, 2, & 3. *Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark ſayings of old; which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.*

THESE words are the engaging addreſs of the Prophet to the tribes of Iſrael, when he beſpoke their attention to the law which God had given them. Interpreters generally underſtand the words in the firſt clauſe of verſe 1ſt as uttered in the name of God himſelf, whoſe people Iſrael was, and whoſe holy law was publiſhed among them. It is certain, that no prophet, not even David himſelf, had a title to call Iſrael *his people*, unleſs in a ſecondary and imperfect ſenſe. Although God had raiſed him to the throne, and given him to ſway the ſceptre over Judah, he had not aſſigned over that nation to him and his family as an abſolute property, but only in charge, and to be kept no longer than ſerved the ſpiritual ends he had in view by this appointment. In the political and civil conſtitution of Judea, no example, therefore, was ſet of that arbitrary and unlimited ſway, which the Princes of the earth had affected to eſtabliſh over their ſubjects. On the contrary, under the government of the Kings of Judah and Iſrael, we find them ſtill ſtiled the congregation of the Lord. They are called his *inheritance* in reſpect of his ſanctuary among them, which he would not alienate

alienate or transfer to any of the ſons of men; and to thoſe Princes only a delegated and conditional cuſtody of it was given, according to the ſtatutes that God had preſcribed. Hence it is to be obſerved, that the words, *my law*, muſt be underſtood as referable unto God; his law and teſtimony being the only one which Iſrael was bound to hear and acknowledge. If any prince or prophet taught or enjoined what was contrary to that law, he was not to be liſtened to, but diſregarded, and looked upon as impious, if he held himſelf forth as the author of the divine law. And, indeed, it muſt be owned, that this is never the ſtyle of the Pſalmiſt David. Even when he ſpeaks of it, as tranſcribed into his heart, and as the light of his ſoul and mind, he ſtiles it, *the law of the Lord.* We have therefore reaſon to conſider theſe words, *Give ear, my people, to my law*, as a *motto* taken from the book of the law, and, for more ſolemnity, prefixed to this Pſalm.

But the inſpired penman may be underſtood as ſpeaking in his own perſon, when he adds, *Incline your ears to the words of my mouth*, &c. In theſe words, the Prophet declares, that it was his meaning and purpoſe, in his preſent compoſition, to preſent a commentary on the books of the law written by Moſes, and to throw his thoughts upon them into the form of a parable. This ſpecies of writing did not only comprehend a figurative and allegorical kind of inſtruction, ſuch as is often uſed in the goſpel; but, in the more ancient times, it alſo comprehended a ſhort narrative of hiſtory, with religious and moral reflections upon it. This kind of parable was more intelligible than that which was afterwards adopted; although it contained *dark ſayings of old;* that is, recorded the tranſactions of ages and generations long paſt, and therefore liable to be obſcure or forgotten. It may be ſaid, indeed, that the ancient hiſtory of the Jewiſh nation could not fall into oblivion or obſcurity; ſince the book of the law, underſtood to mean the five books of Moſes, was laid up in the tabernacle, and in the temple, and preſerved pure and incorrupted in Iſrael. But it ought to be conſider-

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ed, in order to underſtand this paſſage, and ſeveral others of the ſacred hiſtory, that there were very few copies of the book of the law tranſcribed. Such of them as were wrote out, remained unopen to the bulk of the people. They heard the law read at the ſolemn feaſts; but they had no opportunity to peruſe the volume of it in their houſes. Hence they were enjoined to commit what they read of it to their memory; and, according to the exhortation in Deuter. vi. 7, *to teach its precepts diligently to their children; to talk of them when they ſat in their houſes, when they walked by the way, when they lay down and roſe up.* And hence the Pſalmiſt here ſpeaks of the knowledge of the law, as communicated by the inſtruction of their fathers, who performed the office of prieſts in their families, by teaching their children all they had learned or knew of the divine teſtimonies.

VERSE 4. *We will not hide them from their children, ſhewing to the generation to come the praiſes of the Lord, and his ſtrength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.*—As if the Pſalmiſt had ſaid, 'Indebted as we are to our pious fathers, for information and light 'about the diſpenſations of God to the ſeed of Abraham, we count 'it our indiſpenſible duty to diſcharge the ſame office to our chil-'dren. We ſhould be culpable before God and them, if we did 'not exert all our ability and care to enlighten their minds upon 'the intereſting ſubject of God's wonderful works to Iſrael; for the 'knowledge and contemplation of them will cheriſh the ſacred prin-'ciples of religion in their minds, and lay ſuch a foundation for his 'honour and praiſe, as may never be weakened in them. By it 'they will be convinced, how ſtrong in might, how excellent in 'counſel, and unerring in wiſdom, that God is whom Iſrael are 'bound to ſerve and adore.' Parents, conſider this declaration and ſentiment of the Pſalmiſt. It becomes you duly to reflect upon it. If your children demand your beſt inſtruction, your care and pains for their tuition, it is no more than you in early years ſtood in need of and received from your fathers. "You are required, juſtly, to pay back

back what was given unto you. Deprive them not of the benefit of which you were made partakers in their condition. If you are attentive to feed and to clothe them, and to give them that portion of worldly goods Providence has aſſigned you; O with-hold not from them what is far more advantageous. There is a light to be held forth to them for the moral frame of their minds, for their conduct in the difficult ſteps of life, for their hope and their comfort in trouble, and in death itſelf, which it becomes you to impart unto them. A ſenſe of God, and his ways, of pure and undefiled religion, is this light. You were early acquainted with it, and were benefited by it in your entry into the world, and in your converſe with it. Ceaſe not, then, to impreſs it on the minds of your offſpring, to recommend it to them, and to leave it as the moſt valuable and abiding legacy, when you are about to be ſeparated from them."

VERSE 5. *For he eſtabliſhed a teſtimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Iſrael, which he commanded our fathers, that they ſhould make them known to their children.*—The obligation Iſrael was under, both to ſtudy the divine law themſelves, and to teach it to their children, is intimated in theſe words. It was their peculiar mercy and privilege, that God had diſpenſed this law, in which the knowledge of himſelf, of his righteouſneſs, and his ſalvation, was made known to them. He had not then dealt ſo with any other nation. The other tribes of the earth were left to the dark and doubtful conjectures of their own minds, with reſpect to the religious ſervice they owed to the God of heaven and earth; and being, as the Apoſtle Paul ſays, without any law but that of natural conſcience, they erred egregiouſly, both in their ſenſe of religion and moral duty; *worſhipping the creatures, and the works of their own hands, more than the Creator, who is God bleſſed for ever.* But Iſrael was favoured with a gift, which the wiſe among them ſought after, but could not find; a gift, of all others the moſt precious and valuable; a communication of heavenly wiſdom, which taught them *what was good, and what*

what the Lord required of them, to do juſtice, love mercy, and walk humbly before him. The law of God, in its ceremonial, as well as in its moral part, was the preſervation and life of Iſrael. On the obſervance of it depended their ſubſiſtence and welfare as a nation. They could not revolt from it without forfeiting all the divine bleſſings promiſed to obedience, and incurring the penalties annexed to its tranſgreſſion. In fact, it was ſo interwoven with their eſtabliſhment as a people, that, although God had not inflicted the threatened penalties of diſobedience, they would not only have ceaſed to flouriſh, but been undone in their national capacity. Their coherence, and union as a people, was founded upon the worſhip and ſervice of the only living and true God of Iſrael. If they forſook it, and were caught in the ſnare of the idolatry of the nations around them, the inevitable conſequence was, that they would be diſunited and ſeparated as a community. The ſame tie of religion which kept them faithful to their God and Redeemer, alſo maintained among them all their national and civil connections. If his law and teſtimony was forgotten among them, there enſued a looſing of theſe ties; and hence it was, that when Jeroboam's idolatry prevailed, Iſrael's banner was rent aſunder; ten tribes revolted from Judah; and, although they held a ſeparate kingdom from it for a time, they were, by ſeveral captivities, diſperſed among the heathen nations, and loſt all their temporal honour and name.

If ſuch was the juſt judgment of God inflicted upon Iſrael, on account of their abuſe of his peculiar mercies vouchſafed to them, we may be aſſured, that every nation placed in ſimilar circumſtances of favour from on high, if they offend in a like manner, ſhall be *puniſhed with their rod.* Ingratitude to God for temporal benefits daily received from his liberal hand, muſt be accounted a ſin heinous in his ſight. Even where it is known to be juſtly chargeable by men upon others, it excites indignation. How great, then, muſt we pronounce its guilt to be, when committed againſt the giver of all good! He beſtows what men, the higheſt upon earth, cannot give; even the

light of his word, and the power of his grace, to renew their depraved natures, and lead them on in the way to a nearer intercourſe with himſelf, productive here of a ſpiritual life, and of an immortal one in heaven. What he requires in return for obedience and conformity to his will, is not like what men ſometimes look for, or demand for their favours, a ſervice which would tend to their diſgrace. *Thoſe who do honour to him are honoured of him.* Whether they be communities, families, or individuals, they find it to their comfort, *that their righteouſneſs exalts them; while ſin is a reproach to any people.* The Pſalmiſt, to the end of the verſe, exhibits a particular and lengthened out bill of the mercies of God to the children of Iſrael, and of their repeated provocations and criminal ingratitude. It was to ſtand upon record, and be kept as a teſtimony to following generations; that if they were ſpared, and not utterly deſtroyed, it was for his *mercies ſake*, and to prove that his holy covenant of ſpiritual redemption and grace promiſed from the beginning in behalf of ſinful mankind, was not to be made void in any reſpect; but, notwithſtanding the ſins of that people to whom it was revealed, to be verified, and have its fulfilment in the manner declared by their prophets. Therefore *the ſceptre was not to depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came.* If Iſrael, under the deluſion that the Meſſiah's commiſſion was to ſet up and perpetuate a temporal kingdom in their land, rejected the bleſſings of a ſpiritual one offered to them, then it would be ſeen by what manifeſt and dreadful teſtimonies of the divine indignation ſuch a people were puniſhed. The acts of their ingratitude and diſobedience, long as the line of them was, appeared to be ſummed up in their ſignal *cataſtrophe. The blindneſs*, as the evangelical Apoſtle expreſſes it, *that fallen had upon them*, was evinced to be *judicially* inflicted of God. *The veil upon their hearts* was made thick, and appointed for continuance. It remains to this day a memorial awfully inſtructive to mankind, that in proportion to the nature, extent, and value of the divine mercies conferred

ferred upon any people; ſo ſhall the judgments ordained for the neglect or miſapplication of them be, not only in their ſeverity, but alſo in the length of their duration. Let us hear this, and conſider what ſhall be our doom, if we deſpiſe the *height and the depth, the breadth and the length of the love of God, wherewith he hath abounded to us in the goſpel of his Son Chriſt Jeſus our Redeemer.*

LECTURE XXV.

PSALM LXXXI.

VERSES 1, 2, 3. *Sing aloud unto the Lord: make a joyful noiſe unto the God of Jacob. Take a pſalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleaſant harp with the pſaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new-moon, in the time appointed, on our ſolemn feaſt-day.*

THE religious worſhip, appointed under the law, had many external ſolemnities. The people were called to expreſs their public adoration and praiſe of God, by their united voices, lifted up in loud and cheerful ſtrains. This is intimated by the Pſalmiſt here, when he requires them to ſing aloud unto God their ſtrength, and to make a joyful noiſe unto the God of Jacob. The epithet, or title, given to God as their ſtrength, was a proper and expreſſive one, to put them in mind that God was their only hope and confidence, and their almighty deliverer. He is alſo ſtyled the God of Jacob, to intimate the peculiar relation they ſtood in to him; who, by his covenant, had declared himſelf the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and who had promiſed to bleſs their ſeed and their deſcendents, and fulfil his many gracious promiſes to them. But beſides the vo-

cal expreſſions of praiſe, various inſtruments of muſic added to the ſolemnity and lively performance of the public worſhip. The Pſalmiſt mentions three of theſe, the timbrel, the harp, and the pſaltery, which either ſingly performed different parts of the ſacred hymn or ſong unto God, or joined their harmony together to render it more enlivening and complete. There is an exhortation added to blow up the trumpets. We find, in Numbers 10th, that theſe inſtruments were uſed for aſſembling the people at the door of the tabernacle, and not only ſo, but the children of Iſrael were directed to employ them in their ſtated feſtivals, eſpecially thoſe that enſued the firſt day of every month. Therefore, it is ſaid, Numbers x. 10. *Alſo in the day of your gladneſs, and in your ſolemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye ſhall blow with the trumpet over your burnt-offerings, and over the ſacrifices of your peace-offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God; I am the Lord your God.* This inſtitution particularly took place on the firſt day of their ſeventh month, called the feaſt of trumpets, Numbers 28th. And it is ſuppoſed by interpreters, that the Pſalm was compoſed for that day, in the celebration of which ſuch particular directions are given, Numbers 29th. It became Iſrael, therefore, to receive and obſerve it as an ordinance of divine appointment, and ſo the Pſalmiſt adds, *It was a ſtatute in Iſrael, and a law of the God of Jacob.* This was enough to make the ritual appointments of this feſtival, and every other enjoined by the law, however fraught with ceremonies, binding and obligatory on the whole congregation of Iſrael. They could not, without throwing off their allegiance to the God of their fathers, and renouncing all the promiſes of his covenant, diſpenſe with what the law required of them. And if, either in the performance of public worſhip, or in the ſacrifices and offerings, there was to be due obedience and conformity to the legal precepts; if the ſanctuary ſervice, which was, in many reſpects, typical, was to be held in reverence; how ought the duties of religion, under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, to be punctually obeyed: That diſpenſation of grace,

which

which teaches us to worſhip God, who is a ſpirit in ſpirit and truth; and, inſtead of ſacrifices and offerings, requires us to do juſtice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God.

VERSE 5. *This he ordained in Joſeph for a teſtimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt; where I heard a language that I underſtood not.*—Beſides the ſovereign right aud authority which God had to preſcribe a law, and a teſtimony of his will to Iſrael, here ſignified by Joſeph their patriarch, it is declared by the Pſalmiſt, that the particular law given them took its riſe from the divine protection of them in the land of Egypt; when, for their ſakes, God is ſaid to have paſſed through it, an expreſſion which implies that it was made the ſcene of the divine judgments. That nation, rich, opulent, and proud of its power and wealth, was then awfully viſited by him. Their king, who had other princes tributary to him, and who believed himſelf at liberty to ſubjugate and enſlave other nations, was inſtructed, that the Moſt High only ruleth over the kingdoms of men, and determines concerning them as ſeemeth to him good. The fruits of that fertile land were deſtroyed. Its ſprings and its river were turned into blood: Its firſt-born were ſtruck with ſudden death; a fearful darkneſs hung over its horizon; the palace of Pharaoh, and the houſes of his princes, were afflicted with ſtrange plagues: For why? God ſaw the cup of their iniquity filled up, and that the time of his juſt vengeance was come. To all their other injuries, oppreſſions, and cruelties, they had added that of dealing unmercifully with the children of Iſrael, who, though inoffenſive, uſeful, and beneficial to the Egyptians, were treated by them like ſlaves. There Iſrael were made ſenſible that they dwelt in a foreign land among ſtrangers, whoſe religion, manners, laws, and language were at the greateſt variance with theirs. Every thing ſerved to put them in mind of their exile from the land of their fathers. In this they were an image of the people of God in all ages, who live among the children of the world, alienated from him. The principles,

ciples, the maxims, the doctrines they hear recommended in the world, are all different from thoſe they have embraced.

Yet, unleſs the people, who have the knowledge, and profeſs the worſhip of the only true God, underſtand, and are convinced in their hearts, of the ineſtimable benefit of it, they may and will be tempted to decline from their principles, and gradually adopt thoſe of the world around them. If the children of Iſrael had not been kept from the contagion of the Egyptian idolatry, by means of the *ſigns and wonders* that have been mentioned in general, as demonſtrative of the almighty power and ſovereign ſway over all the departments of the natural world, and poſſeſſed always and excluſively by the God whom they profeſſed to ſerve; if there had not been, by the ſpecial proviſion of God, a territorial diſtrict aſſigned to them, which kept them together, and at ſome diſtance from ſuch conſtant intercourſe with the Egyptians, as the other enſlaved and diſperſed tribes could not avoid; if theſe gracious preventives had not been employed in their behalf, there can hardly be a doubt, that they would have been attracted to, and involved in, the maſs of the prevailing idolatry. Even after all that had been miraculouſly done for their protection, they could not eſcape its contagious influence. It appeared, indeed, that, although they *groaned under their burdens*, they would have borne them as well as they could, if Moſes, marvellouſly ſaved from periſhing, or being in infancy cut off in conſequence of Pharaoh's ſavage decree for the ſlaughter of all the male children of the *Hebrews*, had not been raiſed up and commiſſioned of God to be their viſible deliverer. But *in him they would not, at firſt, believe or obey; but thruſt him from them* in a diſdainful manner, ſaying, *who made thee a ruler or a judge over us?* When they were led forth from Egypt reluctantly, and under fear for their ſafety, they diſcovered, upon various occaſions, *that in their hearts they hankered after, and wiſhed to return into the place of their bondage.* So half converted ſouls, if they get but ſome preſent relief from the felt evil of their ſinful paſſions, begin to think leſs of it;

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and that they had been too hasty in judging of its effects; and that, having borne them so far tolerably, they may try and endure them again. This deception hath the more influence, when they consider that the ways of religion are hard and difficult to be followed. Having little or no experience in them, they understand not how they can proceed in them, without much pain and trouble to themselves. We may be thrown into more distress, say they, than yet we have suffered; and, therefore, like the children of Israel, they account it best to turn back, and be subjected to their former masters.

The behaviour of the Israelites, when so highly favoured of God, exemplified, in a striking manner, the innate and almost invincible depravity of human nature. How justly does the Prophet say upon this subject; *Can the Ethiopian change his colour, or the leopard his spots? no more can they who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.* The taint of the Egyptian idolatry, which the Israelites had received, stuck to them, and operated with more efficacy than all the wonderful works of God which they had beheld, and availed so much for their deliverance from their oppressions, and their servile and heavy tasks. *They made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.* Here we discover the source and acceptability of idolatrous worship, and how it came to be so generally admitted in the world. To have gods of their own making, could not but be flattering to the pride and vanity of mankind. As not their figure only, but their supposed affections and passions were human; they could not fail to be the more delighted in. Every nation might have them to their taste; every family might carve their household-deity in their own likeness; and prescribe what sort of service was to be paid to him. Horrible figures, besmeared with blood, we know, some of them were; and the rites with which they were served, and the sacrifices offered to them, were no less detestable. Among the most civilised of the nations, their tutelary god was generally of such a character as bespoke the genius or predominant passion, or study of which the people

people were the declared votaries. In the catalogue, the human vices were in more than equal honour with the virtues, and their ſhrines ſurpaſſed the other in numbers. After this manner was the earth liable to be wholly overſpread with the profanation of the name of religion, and a licenſe and ſanction given to ſins, iniquities, and vices of every kind.

Was the God of all the earth to behold this, and be ſilent? Was he not to come forth, as he did in Egypt, the nurſery of all idolatry, and puniſh it there in an exemplary manner? Even to the tribes of Iſrael, whom he had choſen to oppoſe the torrent of impiety, and eſtabliſh the honour of his name in the world, it was neceſſary to ſpeak, and anſwer their requeſts, expreſſed often with impatience and diſtruſt of his almighty power, in a manner that put them in mind how fearful to the impious, the diſobedient, and ungrateful, that God might be whom they ſerved. Tremenduous were beheld the ſigns of his preſence at Mount Sinai, when, as the Apoſtle deſcribes them, Heb. xii. 18, & 19. *The mount at times burned with fire, and was encompaſſed around with blackneſs, and darkneſs, and tempeſt; while the voice and words that came from the midſt of it were ſo terrible, that thoſe who heard them intreated that they ſhould not be ſpoken to them any more.* Why did a God of mercy *thus clothe himſelf with terrors* in the ſight of a people ſet apart from the reſt of the world to be his worſhippers? He ſhowed not himſelf, nor ſpoke ſo, to *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, or *Jacob*. It was foreſeen and known to him, how this people would behave, who in this reſpect, indeed, cannot be ſaid with certainty to have done worſe than any other generation of ſinful men would have done, had they been treated in the ſame manner, that is, made the peculiar objects of the favour of God, and not had their iniquities and tranſgreſſions puniſhed always as they deſerved. Wrote down it was, and teſtified in the hiſtory of this people, that, not by accumulated mercies, but by judgments ſent abroad among them, that the inhabitants of our degenerate world were to be kept, even in any ſufferable way to their duty,

and

and *learn righteouſneſs*. Accordingly, as is held forth in the detailed account of Iſrael's ingratitude given in the preceding Pſalm, it was evinced that, when God dealt moſt graciouſly with them, they were then moſt inclined to make light of his marvellous favours and benefits: *They forgot them*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *and ſinned ſtill the more: But when he ſlew them, then they ſought him; and they returned and inquired early after God; they remembered that he was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer*. It appeared, however, that their reverence and ſubmiſſion was rather affected and external, than ſincere and from the heart. Therefore, as it is here ſaid, that God anſwered them *out of the ſecret place of thunder*; ſo it is added, that *he proved* to what a height of diſcontent, murmuring, and rebellion againſt his ſervice their corrupt and unthankful hearts were capable of being raiſed at the *waters of Meribah*, that were ſo denominated from the contention and *ſtrife* they entered into with Moſes and Aaron; as if they, notwithſtanding all they had ſeen and experienced of the wonderful works, had been brought out of Egypt, to periſh wholly and miſerably in the *wilderneſs of Sin*, where no water for the congregation was to be found. Moſes was commanded of God to take his *rod*, by which various miracles had been wrought before, and *ſtrike* the flinty *rock*; and the water came out abundantly for their relief: And thus, it is ſaid, the *Lord was ſanctified in the eyes of that unbelieving and rebellious people*, to the demonſtration and glory both of his power and of his grace, when he performed what they thought to be utterly impoſſible, and, in the act done, teſtified, that, heinous and aggravated as their tranſgreſſions were, his unbounded goodneſs and compaſſion could forgive the guilt of them; and, inſtead of deſerved wrath, make them ſignal examples of his mercy and long forbearance of juſt puniſhment. The reaſon aſſigned for this in the Pſalm above quoted, verſe 39th, is remarkable. *He remembered that they were but fleſh; a wind that paſſeth away, and cometh not again.* Periſh with themſelves in a ſhort time might the evil, and even the memory of their iniquities among men, if they

were immediately cut off from the earth. They are ſpared that they may repent. But it appears to be more for the honour of God, if they did not repent, that his promiſes of mercy and grace to the humble and penitent, according to his holy covenant, ſhould be held forth and fulfilled, than that ungodly and ungrateful men ſhould always receive the puniſhment of their impiety and ſins in this preſent life. At leaſt, we muſt ſay, that this point reſts in the will of God.

VERSES 8, 9, & 10. *Hear, O my people, and I will teſtify unto thee: O Iſrael, if thou wilt hearken unto me; There ſhall no ſtrange god be in thee; neither ſhalt thou worſhip any ſtrange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*—Upon theſe verſes, we have firſt to obſerve a change in the perſon who ſpeaks, without its being ſignified; a ſtyle of compoſition, admitted in the Hebrew poetry; and therefore frequently occurring in the book of Pſalms, and ſometimes in the ſcriptures of the other prophets. If the tranſition taken notice of, in the 1ſt verſe of the 78th Pſalm, is ſo abrupt as to occaſion a doubt, whether it be the Divine Being, or the Pſalmiſt inſpired by him, is the ſpeaker, here there can be none, as the tranſition evidently commences at the 6th verſe; or that *Aſaph*, to whom, as their author, both theſe Pſalms are aſcribed, ſpeaks in the name of God, as he does in that of the people of Iſrael in the latter clauſe of the 5th verſe, where it is ſaid, *I heard a language that I underſtood not. Secondly*, In the addreſs to Iſrael, beginning at the 8th verſe, it is to be remarked, that they are thrice denominated God's people, called, as they were, to hear the word of his laws, and eſpecially that commandment which forbid them to have any *ſtrange God* among them, or to worſhip in mind, or with their lips, any other but himſelf alone. They are put in rememberance, that *he*, their God, by liberating them from the yoke of Egypt, had a claim to their ſervice, not only as their Creator, but their merciful Redeemer. In this relation to him, if duly acknowledged by obedience to his revealed will,

will, he might be regarded as a father, who tenderly watches over the wants of his children, and ſo ready to ſupply them, that the bare ſignification of *what they would have* is immediately complied with. The words uſed in the 10th verſe, to expreſs the exuberant bounty of the Divine Being, imply, that they could have no deſire, conſiſtent with their real good, but what would be fulfilled by him. Yet they imagined that all this compliance might be teſtified on the part of God, while they paid no regard to his counſels. They were given up, therefore, to walk in their own; than which nothing could be more pernicious and fatal to them. Better for them it would have been to have undergone the ſevereſt chaſtiſement. But as this had been tried upon them in a degree ſufficient for correction without producing it, it remained only, in the exerciſe of the moral diſcipline of God, that they ſhould be reſigned over to the ſwing of their inordinate paſſions; that they might prove, to their experience, what miſerable counſellors they were. Impetuous and blind to every conſideration, but how they are to be gratified, they are incapable of rational deliberation, either with reſpect to the eligibility of their object, or the conſequence likely to reſult from attachment to it. They endeavour to go on in their courſe of life with ſome eaſe or freedom from pain; but even in this hope they are diſappointed; they find that there is but one way in life which leads to quietneſs and peace; and this they have forſaken, and ſo far abandoned, that when, in the miſery of their wretched wanderings, they try to ſeek it, they cannot find its path. Loſt to their view is the tract of it; and, if it were open, their hearts revolt, and tell them, they could not walk in it. Thus, *as the book of Proverbs ſaith, His own iniquities ſhall take the wicked himſelf, and he ſhall be holden with the cords of his own ſins. He ſhall die without inſtruction; and in the greatneſs of his folly he ſhall go aſtray.* But, as is pronounced by the mouth of Divine Wiſdom, *Bleſſed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the poſts of my doors. For who ſo findeth me findeth life, and ſhall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that ſinneth*

againſt me wrongeth his own ſoul: all they that hate me love death. Proverbs v. 22, & 23.—viii. 34, 35, & 36.

If the verſes that follow from the 13th to the end of the Pſalm be only read with attention, ſo tender and pathetic are the ſtrains of them, that every one who has any devout or moral ſentiment in his ſoul, may be ready to ſay, *they need no comment:* Their import is manifeſt; and the feelings they impreſs may be leſſened, but cannot be improved by any expoſition. Read them again *ye blind in mind, and hardened in heart*, who have no more ſenſe of the pity, the compaſſion, the fatherly ſolicitude exerciſed by the God of mercy, even to the ungrateful and rebellious, than you have of muſic in your ears; and ye can hardly fail to be touched with them in ſome degree. But all thoſe who have peruſed this memorial of the contraſt between the boundleſs goodneſs of the Divine Being, and the refractory ſpirit of the people of Iſrael, will be moved afreſh at every reading of it; and their hearts will glow with holy adoration and praiſe of that God, whom the Pſalmiſt celebrates in the ſong that hath for its melting cadence to every verſe, *For his mercy endureth for ever.* Pſalm cxxxvi. They will alſo recollect various other texts of Scripture, the ſummary of which is given in this memorial; and that expreſs in more emphatic terms, yet not more affecting, with what reluctance the Deity is repreſented, as proceeding to puniſh the moſt preſumptuous and obſtinate tranſgreſſors, *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the ſinner; but rather am willing that he ſhould repent, and come unto me, and live. Turn ye, turn ye; why will you die, O ye tranſgreſſors?* His ſuſpending the ſtrokes of his indignation, that the ſufferers by them might conſider their woeful condition, *Why ſhould ye be ſtricken any more? The whole head is ſick, and the whole heart faint.* His word, being that of his holy law, ſpeaks terrors to the impenitent; but he uſes lenitives, he comes into conference, and deſires to reaſon with them: *Come now, and let us reaſon together: Though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they*

ſhall

ſhall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the good of the land: But if you refuſe, and rebel, ye ſhall be devoured with the ſword; for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it. The dreadful evils they would ſuffer by their continued apoſtacies and diſobedience, and the forfeiture of all temporal and ſpiritual good they would make by the loſs of his favour, is held forth as cauſing regret and concern to the Deity himſelf, ſignified by the prophet in theſe aſtoniſhing words of commiſeration, *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? How ſhall I make thee as Admah? How ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me; my relentings are kindled together.* When we conſider what additional energy the three laſt verſes of the Pſalm would receive from the muſical voices of the people, varying their notes, and the performers upon inſtruments either following, or leading their tones, and both uniting in harmonious accords, it may be reckoned, that the pſalmodical ſtrains would convey to the hearts of the congregation of Iſrael, impreſſions alike in their import, and not leſs affecting to the heart, than the ſtriking diction of the prophet, Hoſea xi. 8.

LECTURE XXVI.

PSALM LXXXII.

VERSE 1. *God ſtandeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods.*

AMONG the moral perfections aſcribed to the Deity, that of his juſtice is a principal one; and the Pſalmiſt here holds it forth in an intereſting point of view to the children of men. As among all

all nations, that are in any manner civilized, there is an image of diſtributive juſtice in the courts or ſeats of judgment, that are formed for the protection of the innocent, and the puniſhment of the guilty; and as theſe tribunals are fenced and rendered awful by the perſonal preſence of princes, or their ſubſtitutes, they are here put in mind that God, the Supreme Judge of all the earth, ſtands in the midſt of ſuch aſſemblies, that is, he pays a particular attention, and takes a near concern in what paſſes there; and ought to be conſidered as the inſpector of their decrees, and the all ſeeing witneſs of their procedure. However, then, they may appear to humble men to be inveſted with an authority which none can contravert or controul, and to occupy the place and rank of gods upon earth, that have power to ſave mens lives, or to deſtroy them, it is here declared, that they have no more than a ſubordinate charge; for the exerciſe of which they are accountable, and for which God will call them into judgment before him. *The title of Gods*, which the divine law gave to the appointed judges, as you may ſee, Exodus xxii. 28. *Thou ſhalt not revile the gods, nor curſe the ruler of thy people.* *This title*, I ſay, did not exempt them from having their deciſions examined, and their actions canvaſſed by the Sovereign Ruler and Righteous Judge of all mankind: Nay, on this very account, and becauſe, in the providence of God, the temporal doom of their fellow-creatures was committed to them: They ſhall be made the objects of a more ſpecial and ſtricter judgment from him, in that day when, as it is ſaid, Pſalm l. *He ſhall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, to declare his righteouſneſs;* and take upon himſelf the part of judge, to render to every one the recompenſe of his ways.

VERSE 2. *How long will ye judge unjuſtly, and accept the perſons of the wicked? Selah.*—The rebuke here given to the judges of the earth is a juſt and well founded one. It proceeds upon an alleged abuſe of their office, into which too many of them were known to fall. It points out one fertile ſource of iniquity committed by them, from

from their partial and intereſted reſpect to the perſons ſiſted before them, and allowing this conſideration to weigh with them in determining the cauſe. This depraved ſpirit of the judges ſubverts the deſign of their inſtitution, which is intended to maintain equity, and make it reſpectable among all claſſes of men. When, inſtead of this, perſonal favour or intereſt is allowed to have influence with them, there is an end of all juſtice. The parties learn not to place their ſecurity in their integrity and innocence, but to employ other means to carry their cauſe. Bribes, powerful ſollicitations, artful inſinuations, or flattering promiſes, are what they truſt to; and the principle of truth and equity being expelled from the breaſt of the judge, it is ſcorned and deſpiſed by all thoſe who have hopes of obtaining his favour, and being perſonally accepted of him. In this manner, wickedneſs, finding a protection where it ought to tremble, is encouraged to go on, without fear of God or man, till every religious and civil tie being diſſolved among all ranks of people, open violence breaks forth, rapine and cruelty fills the ſtreets of every city; and the nation, afflicted with many plagues, finds, perhaps too late, that the ſource of them has been a general corruption of its judges, and the *acceptance of the perſons of the wicked.*

VERSES 3, & 4. *Defend the poor and fatherleſs: do juſtice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.*—It belongs to the character of a juſt and upright judge to make no diſtinction at the bar of juſtice between men; but to render it equally to them all, whether they be rich, or whether they be poor; and, therefore, we find this excellent injunction given to the judges of Iſrael. Lev. xix. 15. *Ye ſhall do nō unrighteouſneſs in judgment; thou ſhalt not reſpect the perſon of the poor, nor honour the perſon of the mighty; but in righteouſneſs ſhalt thou judge thy neighbour.* But as the partiality and corruption of judges moſt commonly ariſes from their diſpoſition to favour the rich, and deſpiſe the poor, they are here called on to *defend the poor and fatherleſs;* to conſider

conſider the low and helpleſs ſituation of thoſe who want all means to defend themſelves, who are liable to have all advantages taken againſt them; and who often are at a loſs to get their cauſe properly repreſented. A juſt judge will conſider theſe hardſhips they labour under, and will afford a remedy for them: He will not allow the art, or the craft of the wealthy and wicked, to operate to their prejudice. He will be vigilant to detect, and courageous to puniſh, all iniquitous practices that may be uſed againſt them; and, in certain caſes, if they be found in the wrong, he will ſo moderate the rigour of juſtice, that what was intended as a penalty and a terror to evil doers, may not prove the utter deſtruction of thoſe who have tranſgreſſed, in leſſer acts, the rules of juſtice, and, by their acknowledgment, that they may juſtly have the ſentence of the law paſſed upon them, afford a degree of aſſurance or probability of their being reclaimed, and will ceaſe to commit ſuch iniquity any more.

VERSE 5. *They know not, neither will they underſtand; they walk on in darkneſs; all the foundations of the earth are out of courſe.*— Theſe words repreſent moſt emphatically and awfully what a cataſtrophe befals any people or nation, in which the principles and adminiſtration of public juſtice are ſubverted. It proves to them, in the Pſalmiſt's conception, a calamity comparable to that which enſues from the earth's undergoing, in its parts, a convulſive ſhock. The breach of the laws of the moral world of God is no leſs pernicious to the well being of mankind, and productive of their confuſion, than is beheld in the natural one, and felt by its inhabitants, when its fabric is diſcompoſed, and threatened with ruin. The earthquakes, the fiery mountains, and the whirlwinds, have their limited time of raging; and, after creating partial devaſtations, become calm, or are exhauſted altogether. In the meanwhile, men are deeply affected with theſe terrors, and dread the anger of the Sovereign Ruler of all the earth. But their apprehenſions are not ſo quickly or awfully excited by the prevalence of injuſtice, iniquity, deceit, and falſe dealings

ings among themſelves, which correſpond to the bias of their hearts, and creep on by inſenſible degrees; while it appears that no principle of religion or morality is regarded but in outward ſhow. Thoſe who, from their advanced ſtation in public life, ought to have known how eſſential, how indiſpenſibly neceſſary to the ſubſiſtence and welfare of every human ſociety the faithful diſcharge of the duties and truſt appertaining to it became, either *do not know them* in this light, or, being inſtructed by the word of God, will not *underſtand* or be convinced of the truth or neceſſity of them, except in a mere political view. Having, therefore, not the principle, but the pride of their office to maintain, and its emoluments more than equitable judgment in their eye, they are ſaid by the Pſalmiſt to *walk on in darkneſs*, inconſiderate of the wrongs they do, and with leſs concern, perhaps, about their reputation, as they have too much reaſon to believe, that if they were traduced by the one party, on account of their deciſions, they would be extolled by the other; ſo that nothing could be ſatisfactory to both, unleſs each was allowed to ſit umpire, and decide finally in his own cauſe.

It is not to be thought or imagined that David or Aſaph had penned this Pſalm with any view of reflecting upon the characters of the judges or magiſtrates of Judah and Iſrael, who were in office in their time. It would have been to the diſcredit and ſhame of the king himſelf, who had the appointment of them, and knew it to be a crime ſtated in the law of God, to ſpeak evil of, or calumniate, the rulers or judges, whether ſupreme or ſubordinate, regularly admitted to their function. There would be, however, great occaſion for compoſing ſuch an admonition or directory to thoſe in civil offices, as this Pſalm contains, for their ſuſtaining with impartiality, diligence, and firmneſs of mind the dignified character they bore; when we conſider the convulſed ſtate of the commonwealth of Iſrael, not only in the latter part of Saul's reign, but during the hoſtile conteſts that enſued before David got poſſeſſion of the ſceptre and rule over the twelve tribes; and even then, they were not ſo reſtrained, but that

he found Joab's military partizans, and others, often contumacious, *and too ſtrong for him.* The ſcenes that he had beheld, in which the turbulent perſecuted the peaceable; the ſtrong and violent oppreſſed the weak; and all ſentiments of juſtice and equity appeared to be baniſhed from the land, might well induce him to reprobate ſuch enormities; and, as a main help to their removal, to indite the character and qualifications of the judges and magiſtrates, whom he wiſhed to encourage, and call forth, to re-eſtabliſh the honour of the laws and public order, which he hoped to ſee take place in the days of his reign.

It may be underſtood as a certain proof of the unworthy and culpable deportment of thoſe whom the Pſalmiſt had beheld occupying the place of judicature and authority in Iſrael, that they required to be put in mind, as is done by him, verſes 6th & 7th, that although *they were called gods*, and had the outward mark of their being divinely appointed to their rank and commiſſion; yet *they ſhould die like men*, or fall by a ſudden ſtroke of the vengeance of heaven, inflicted often upon one or other of thoſe heathen princes, who *magnified themſelves*, and ſaid, and would have it believed, that there is no one, in heaven or in earth, higher than they. If the Pſalmiſt had juſt reaſon to ſay, metaphorically, that he looked *upon the foundations of the earth as being all put out of their courſe* by ſuch impious and inſolent miſrule exerciſed by the princes of the world, and imitated by thoſe in Iſrael, is there not, alſo, equally valid ground for making the ſame aſſertion; when the bulk of any people who, in every civilized ſtate, fall to be governed, and not to rule, begin to think they may ſet aſide the ordinance of heaven, that *there muſt be a ſubordination of powers and ranks*, which is ſo fundamental and indiſpenſible in all government, that it reaches from the throne of God through all the claſſes and choirs of angels, and forms the harmony of their ſeveral ſpheres. Without the operation of this principle, not even the material and inanimate parts of our world can be conceived to ſubſiſt as ſuch; for its elements muſt have an appointed ſubſervien-

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cy, preventive of diſorder and confuſion that would ariſe, if their ſpecific qualities and powers were the ſame, or in equality with one another. We know not, indeed, but moſt ſuperficially, and rather by eye-ſight and experience, than by concluſions of reaſon, how they are made, diverſified as they are, to ſtand together in one ſyſtem, and co-operate to its greateſt beauty, ornament, and perfection; but we ſee, and are made ſenſible, that theſe excellent effects are produced upon the whole. That people, therefore, who, in the imagination, or pretence of meliorating their condition, would revolt from this unchangeable law that is eſtabliſhed in, and pervades the whole creation of God, are no better, if not worſe, than the moſt impious kings and princes of the earth. It is a ſin of equal enormity with that which cauſed the expulſion of our firſt parents from Paradiſe; and where the ſeeds of it bud in any nation, it is ſtill puniſhable in a ſignal manner. The leaſt attempt to it infers ruin, whatſoever the form of the political government be. Through all the models of it, from that of a family or the patriarchal, from the ariſtocratic to the popular, from the ſlighteſt bands of civil ſociety to the moſt compreſſive chains of deſpotiſm, there muſt be certain degrees of inequality and ſubordination. To ſay *that all men are born equal as to their rights to place or rank in civil government*, is a futile and illuſive argument, unleſs it can be ſaid, with truth, that they are born with equal abilities of body and mind. That there is in the order of providence a difference made in this reſpect, is undeniable; and although it may appear inconſiderable, or ſcarce perceptible, in the infancy of the children of men, it is diſcovered to operate, and have the effect of making diſtinctions among them, when exertions, whether bodily or mental, are required of them in their riper years. Hence thoſe differences and arrangements naturally take place, without which government, in its rudeſt form, could not ſtand. Some are beſt qualified to conſult and to judge about meaſures for the ſafety of the ſtate; others, to go to war, and a great many to be ſubſervient to both theſe claſſes, by practiſing the arts abſolutely neceſſary in civilized life. But, if the two

former, combining againſt the latter, come to vilify and oppreſs them; or, if theſe laſt imagine, becauſe they are the moſt numerous body, they may, or are qualified to occupy and execute all the offices and functions of government; in the one caſe, arbitrary and tyrannical rule enſues, in which no regard is paid to the general good of the people; and, in the other, inceſſant and endleſs controverſies about the diſtribution of power, and how and where it can be moſt properly and ſafely lodged, are produced; and generally terminate in the convulſions of anarchy, or in uncontrouled and terrific deſpotiſm.

As no human inſtitution can be perfect, ſo thoſe of the policies of ſtates have all their defects, and reach not their ends, but in an imperfect manner. Their various forms avail only to make one differ from another in point of utility and benefit, according as rectitude of manners, or moral virtue, is cultivated, and promoted more or leſs among them. When the Pſalmiſt beheld the laws and ſtatutes of God, the pureſt in their principles, the moſt ſalutary in practice, and inforced by the moſt powerful motives to obedience, deſpiſed and trampled upon in Iſrael, he appears to have been ſeized with horror at the view of it, and conſidered it as a preſage of the diſſolution of the world. *Ariſe then*, ſays he, *O God, and judge the earth:* Let thy judgments come forth in ſuch a manner, that the inhabitants may know that its *pillars* totter, and will be ſhaken down, under the weight of abounding ſin and tranſgreſſion. Let each nation feel the preſſure of its burden, and learn, that to thee alone it belongs to pluck down or to build up, to deſtroy or ſave alive, as it ſeemeth good unto thee. Although the proud and mighty potentates of the earth have ſaid, each in their turns, as Nebuchadnezzar did of old, *Behold this city which I have built for the glory of my power;* or this kingdom is mine by conqueſt; that crown by inheritance; and called ſuch acquiſitions by their names, as if they were to remain with their children for ever; yet how often have they been ſtripped of

them

them before their days were ended, or ſeen to ſoon paſs to others, who blotted out their names in diſgrace.

But he, *the Almighty, who created the world, and made its inhabitants of one blood to dwell on all the face of the earth, in their ſucceſſive generations; having before de ermined the times and bounds of their habitation*, he alone can be ſaid *to inherit all nations;* to hold them as an univerſal and unrivalled proprietor, whoſe dominion over them cannot be obſtructed or impaired in the leaſt, by all the revolutions and changes that may befal the kingdoms of men: Nay, theſe ſhall be found, in their iſſue, to have co-operated to the purpoſes of advancing his honour and glory in the world; of which over-ruling of events on the earth, there could be no clearer or greater evidence afforded, than the fulfilment of the Scriptural prophecies reſpecting the kingdom of that divine perſon, called the Meſſiah, to whoſe reign the Pſalmiſt ſo frequently alludes; and to whom it was given, by the divine decree, *to have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for a poſſeſſion.* As his kingdom was deſcribed to be of a different nature, and conſtituted upon other principles than thoſe generally prevalent in the world, Iſaiah xi. 6. it was an aſtoniſhing diſplay both of the wiſdom and power of God, how it could be ſet up and be eſtabliſhed in contrariety to all the prejudices and paſſions of men. *It is the doing of the Lord*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *and therefore muſt be wondrous in our eyes. The ſtone, which the builders refuſed, is become the head ſtone of the corner.* But that only begotten of the Father, to whom he ſaid, *I have ſet my king upon my* holy hill of Zion, is characteriſed as one not only inveſted with all power, but endowed with every qualification for his high and bleſſed office, both as a king and a judge. *For the ſpirit of the Lord ſhall reſt upon him, the ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, the ſpirit of counſel and might, the ſpirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord: And ſhall make him of quick underſtanding in the fear of the Lord; and he ſhall not judge after the ſight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the poor,*

and

and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: And righteouſneſs ſhall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulneſs the girdle of his reins. Let us, then, who have acceſs to know what, in fact, has been the amazing progreſs of the goſpel and kingdom of our Redeemer, look forward in faith to that happy time of the completion of the promiſes with reſpect to it; when the ſins and iniquities of mankind being more and more purged away, by the power and ſpirit of our God, *there ſhall be nothing found to hurt or deſtroy in all his holy mountain; and the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the ſea.*

LECTURE XXVII.

PSALM XCIII.

The Lord reigneth; he is clothed with majeſty; the Lord is clothed with ſtrength wherewith he hath girded himſelf: the world alſo is eſtabliſhed, that it cannot be moved.

THE firſt ſentiment of religion is, that there is a ſovereign ſupreme over all, and a divine government in the world. This conception is natural to the mind of man; it is with the utmoſt difficulty ſuppreſſed, or expelled from it, by the corrupt in heart and the irreligious. That ſoul muſt be dark and gloomy, indeed, before it can adopt the contrary conception. It muſt be reduced to the ſtate of thoſe minds which turn away from the fair face of the divine works, and from the agreeable light ſpread over them, and are only pleaſed with ſcenes of horror and confuſion. But it is the inexpreſſible

preſſible ſatisfaction of a good and well diſpoſed mind, to know and conſider, that the Lord reigns, to trace the evidences of his ſovereign, of his all-wiſe, and all-powerful adminiſtration, both in the natural and moral world. The great Creator, ſays the Pſalmiſt, preſides as head and ruler over all the works he hath made, and the creatures he hath formed. His ſway over them conſiſteth not in vain enſigns of power and authority, ſuch as earthly princes are ſeen to aſſume, but, by an energetic figure of ſpeech, he may be ſaid to be clothed with majeſty, arrayed with all that grandeur, dignity, and excellence, which the mind of man can conceive befitting his exalted dominion and ſovereignty in heaven and earth. Do ye aſk, ye ſons of men, whence he hath attained this majeſtic ſplendour; know, that it is eſſential to his divine nature, a glory altogether his own, and ſelf derived. Look around among all the creatures, from the higheſt to the loweſt order of them, and you can, indeed, ſee nothing but what they have received. Neither their various beauty, nor their ſtrength, has proceeded from themſelves: But the Lord clothes himſelf with ſtrength. It is an attribute of his nature to be begirt with an all-perfect ſufficiency of it. Of this his wonderful works are a proof; ſince we ſee that he hath weighed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance. When we conſider alſo that the foundations of the earth itſelf have been laid by him, and that what appears laſting and durable in its ſtructure and frame is the effect of his Almighty power, we muſt acknowledge, that in the Lord Jehovah only everlaſting ſtrength is to be found, and that he truly is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the ſea. None of the conſtituent parts of this our material world can be ſhaken or removed without his appointment and command. Mouldering, diviſible, and fluctuating, as the natural elements appear, they are compacted together by his hand, and preſerved from diſſolution, until the fixed time of their change arrives. Till then he gives men to rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth before him; while they feel all the gracious effects of his dominion over them; and ſay with

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the Pſalmiſt, in another paſſage, *The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the iſles be glad.*

VERSE 2. *Thy throne is eſtabliſhed of old; thou art from everlaſting.*—But, ſays the Pſalmiſt, let us not imagine that any part of thy works, O God, however ſolid or durable, were coeval with thee, or commenſurate with thy eternity. Before this earth was, thou poſſeſſed thy throne in heaven. From it thou gave forth thy creative mandate, and all things, viſible and inviſible, roſe into being. They had their birth and exiſtence at thy pleaſure, but thou, who gave it them, art from everlaſting; the ſame before, and ſince time began, in thy glorious nature and perfections. How mean and contemptible is the antiquity of any earthly empire, when compared with that of the *Antient* of days; and how fleeting and tranſient every image of power among men: Behold, every ſublunary ſceptre ſhall fall; the throne and the palace ſhall ſink into oblivion. Even the earth itſelf ſhall grow old, and be waſted with age. The ſun that lights our world ſhall be ſhorn of his rays, and be darkened. All the natural productions of time ſhall be abſorbed, and periſh in the flux of it. Unto God only it can be ſaid, *Thy throne is for ever and ever; the ſceptre of thy kingdom ſhall endure throughout all ages.*

VERSES 3, & 4. *The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice: the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noiſe of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the ſea.*—There are ſome appearances in our globe, as if the unruly elements were left to themſelves, without ſuperior direction or controul. The tempeſt breaks forth; the ſea rages, and its ſwelling waves threaten to break all their bounds. Who can allay the furious ſtorm; who can ſay to the raging deep, hitherto ſhall thou come, and no farther? Every creature that beholds it is ſtruck with terror and conſternation: But tremenduous as the ſound of the daſhing waves may be, there is a voice that comes from on high, that is mighty

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tier than the noiſe of many waters. It is the voice of the eternal; and the tempeſtuous ſea hears it. Its tumult ſubſides, its billows retire, and are ſmoothed at the command of the Lord, and the Ruler of the whole earth, who is proved to have every part of nature in ſubjection to him; to hold the reins in every region of it, and to preſide with equal power over the ſea, and in the dry land. Ye faithleſs generation, who acknowledge not this truth, how unhappy are ye. Every ſtrife and diſorder in the elements is enough to make you afraid. Nature itſelf becomes a terror, where no God of it is known. But where a ſenſe of his over-ruling power prevails in the mind, all apprehenſion and dread of this kind is removed. Whether natural or moral diſorder is preſented to view, the enlightened mind will feel calm and ſerene: It reſts ſecure in the contemplation of the providential government of God, who is all-wiſe and all powerful to direct every event, and bring order out of confuſion.

The demonſtrations given of this in the miraculous interpoſitions of the divine Being in behalf of Iſrael, that people whom he had choſen to ſerve him, are recorded moſt ſublimely and beautifully in many of the Pſalms; and as you may read particularly in the 106th and 107th, of too much extent to be here quoted. Yet I cannot diſpenſe with the rehearſal of that univerſally admired tract in the 114th Pſalm, in which is celebrated Iſrael's deliverance from the purſuit of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, and their paſſage through the ſwellings of the river Jordan. The touches given theſe events by the Pſalmiſt's pencil, in the feweſt and ſimpleſt words, are ſignally pathetic and ſentimental, and in ſuch a ſtrain of poetic beauty and propriety, as has made thoſe, who otherwiſe had little reliſh for the ſacred writings, confeſs them to be divinely inſpired. *When Iſrael went out of Egypt from a people of ſtrange language, the ſea ſaw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back; the mountains ſkipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou ſea, that thou fleddeſt: Thou, Jordan, that thou waſt driven back. Tremble,*

thou earth, at the preſence of the Lord, at the preſence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a ſtanding water; the flint into a fountain of waters.

VERSE 5. *Thy teſtimonies are very ſure: holineſs becometh thine houſe, O Lord, for ever.*—The Pſalmiſt concludes with obſerving, that whether God was regarded as giving teſtimonies of his perfections, either in the natural or moral world, in his providential government, or in his kingdom of grace; he was found to be equally true and faithful, and that the children of men might rely with entire confidence on him. Syſtems of religion, and rules of faith, that men might form to themſelves, or borrow from others equally weak and fallible, were ambiguous and uncertain. Too often had mankind been deluded by them; but the law and teſtimony God has given to his people can be ſuſpected of no ſuch fallacy or defect. By attending to it, men know all that is required of them; by conforming to it, they advance in the path of truth and righteouſneſs; and by perſevering in it to the end, they will reap the ſure and full reward that is promiſed. But, adds the Pſalmiſt, let none imagine that he can be a ſervant of thine, or be reckoned among the number of thoſe who embrace thy teſtimonies, who has not attained to a peculiar ſanctity of heart and life, *for holineſs becometh thine houſe, O Lord, for ever.* Such ſpiritual reformation and improvement is the characteriſtic of thy worſhippers, and the badge of thy ſanctuary. To them the command is given, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*, ſays the Lord. To the ſinful, the vicious, and the profligate, it is ſaid, *What have ye to do to tread my courts? Depart from me; I know you not, ye workers of iniquity.* They can, indeed, be known of a righteous and holy God only, in the way of condemnation; and, if the ungodly and impenitent are marked as ſinful and unworthy to enter the tabernacles of God upon earth, how much more ſhall they be excluded from admiſſion into the holy place of the moſt high in heaven, where nothing that bears the ſtain of ſin and impurity can enter, where righteouſneſs only

only dwells for evermore in the immediate preſence of the Divine Being; who is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity without abhorrence, in whoſe ſight the heavens themſelves are ſaid not to be clean enough, and that he charges his angels with imperfection or folly. Let us, therefore, ever keep in mind, and reflect upon the diſpoſition and qualities of ſoul becoming, and required of every one profeſſing to be a citizen of Zion, and to do honour to the Lord in his holy houſe of worſhip and prayer, as thoſe are deſcribed in the 15th and 24th Pſalms; and of whom it is ſaid, *He that doeth theſe things ſhall never be moved*; *and that he ſhall receive the bleſſing from the Lord, and righteouſneſs from the God of his ſalvation.*

LECTURE XXVIII.

PSALM CX.

OF all the Pſalms in the ſacred collection, this now read has been antiently and long diſtinguiſhed, as revealing more directly, than any other, the myſtery of the Meſſiah's perſon, his dignified character, and exalted dominion. It is not in types that theſe are alluded to, as in other Pſalms, but the deſcription of them is ſo ſpecial and exact, that it can be applied to none but him, who is denominated, in the prophets, *the angel of the covenant*, *the anointed and holy one of the Lord*, who was promiſed to be ſent forth from on high for the redemption of all the true Iſrael of God, and the overthrow of the kingdom of darkneſs. Hence, not only the exaltation given him by the God and Father of the univerſe is declared, as you may ob-

ſerve in the firſt verſe, but the offices of king and prieſt are aſſigned to him, not in the order, and according to the courſe of the Levitical law, but by a divine appointment, diſtinct from that law of ordinances. His title to take and fulfill the character and functions of the Meſſiah is aſcribed, not merely to his being born and appearing in the human nature under that diſpenſation, but alſo to his ineffable generation, as the only begotten and beloved of the Father before all ages, or beginning of time, as may be inferred from an interpretation to be given of the 3d verſe. It is alſo to be remarked in general, in the explication of this Pſalm, that the manner in which the Meſſiah is repreſented as executing the high offices aſſigned him, was very different from that which either prophet, prieſt, or king in Iſrael had ever done, or was capable of doing before him. In all and each of their acts and performances, there was an inſufficiency and a defect that required to be ſupplied, and could be rendered perfect by no other but the *elect one choſen of God*, called his *word and his wiſdom*, commiſſioned to go forth, and accompliſh all the divine will and pleaſure in the kingdoms of the world. But I come to explain the verſes as they lie in order:

The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, ſit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footſtool.—Theſe words merit our utmoſt attention, as we find no parallels to them in any other Pſalm, if we except the 2d. They muſt be acknowledged to declare ſome deep myſtery relative to the godhead; for, as there was but one Lord and one God in Iſrael, under the name of *Jehovah*, whom all the tribes profeſſed to worſhip and ſerve; what other Lord was there to whom David could give the title of his Lord with any propriety? Unleſs we take the 2d Pſalm for a commentary upon the words, we muſt be quite at a loſs to underſtand who or what perſonage is here meant by the Pſalmiſt. In that Pſalm, indeed, there is one held forth under the name of *the Lord's anointed*; and of whom Jehovah declares *that he was his begotten ſon, whom he had ſet upon his holy hill of Zion*,

Zion, and who ſhould have the Heathen given him for his heritage, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for a poſſeſſion. There will be, indeed, a great myſtery ſignified, if we ſo underſtand the words, *This day have I begotten thee*, that the Supreme Being, the Lord Jehovah, ſpeaks not of a temporary generation of this Son, but that which was before time began, and therefore eternal. But upon this interpretation a difficulty ariſes; why, or in what ſenſe, is that divine and excellent perſon called the *Son of David*, or one come of his ſeed, or deſcended of him, and his appearance promiſed in a certain future time under the title of the *Meſſiah*, or the one appointed to his miſſion of God? To him, as *Meſſiah*, the name of the Son of David is given, not only in the book of Pſalms, as you may ſee in the 89th, but in the prophetical ſcriptures, as in Iſaiah: *In that day*, ſays the prophet, *there ſhall be a root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an enſign of the people; to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek; and his reſt ſhall be glorious.* Chap. xi. 10. and, in the 1ſt verſe, you find a fuller account of this ſtem of Jeſſe, upon whom, it is declared, *the ſpirit of the Lord was to reſt.* As the promiſes of God were made ſpecially unto David, to whom it was ſaid by God, 2 Samuel vii. 12. *I will ſet up thy ſeed after thee; thy houſe and thy kingdom ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever.* The day of the promiſed Meſſiah is ſometimes ſpoken of by the prophets long after the death of David; as a reign of David their king, and therefore he is called David. *They ſhall ſerve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raiſe up unto them.* Jerem. xxx. 9. But ſtill, amidſt all the deſcriptions of the Meſſiah's character, and bleſſed offices, the Jewiſh church and people, it appears, conceived not of him as having a perſonal exiſtence before his appearance in the world, although, had they compared this Pſalm with the 2d, or conſidered what higher epithets were given him by many of the prophets, they could not, without the greateſt blindneſs or ſtupidity, have imagined that he was one who had his exiſtence only in time, and to whom the Lord Jehovah had aſſigned a worldly kingdom, or a *reign upon earth*, ſuch

ſuch as that of David or Solomon, although far more extenſive and enduring. When they could read in Iſaiah vii. 15. that his name was to be *Immanuel*, or the *ſtrong God* with us, and who was to be produced in a ſupernatural manner into the world, which ſeemed to ſignify ſome ſacred and inexplicable union of the divine nature with the human; and that he was called the *Son of Man*, as well as the *Son of David*, not to expreſs his dignity, but rather his temporary humiliation. In conſequence of the infinite merit of which Daniel had the viſion of him, *when he ſaw one like the Son of Man who came with the clouds of heaven, and was brought near to the Antient of days. And there was given to him a dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages ſhould ſerve him.* Dan. vii. 13. But that all theſe, and other texts, were but ſuperficially conſidered by the Jewiſh expounders of the law and the prophets, there cannot be a greater proof, than that by quoting this *1ſt verſe* only, our Lord put to ſilence the Phariſees aſſembled around him, as you read it, Matthew xxii. 41. *While the Phariſees were gathered together, Jeſus aſked them, ſaying, What think ye of Chriſt? whoſe ſon is he? they ſay unto him, the Son of David. He ſaith unto them, How then doth David in ſpirit call him Lord, ſaying, The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footſtool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his ſon?* And no wonder that this text has perplexed and confounded them as it has ſince done, all thoſe heretics, who have denied or impugned the pre-exiſtence before all time, and the divinity of the only begotten Son of God; who, as the Socinians, would aſcribe to Chriſt the Meſſiah a ſupereminent dignity above angels, all power in heaven and earth being conferred upon him by the Father; and yet, in his origin and generation, believe him to be no more than a *creature*, or *mere man*. Is the Trinity of the Godhead leſs conceivable or more myſterious than ſuch a doctrine? That two perſons of a divine nature, each with the title of Lord, are here mentioned by the Pſalmiſt, cannot be denied; and the only difference marked between them,

them, is, that he calls the one *his Lord*, not from any eſſential difference between them, but becauſe the one was, by the will of the other, to receive a character and office, *that ſet him over all the Iſrael of God;* and for the execution of this office, and to teſtify the other's approbation of it, *He*, whom David calls his Lord, *is ſaid to be ſet at the right hand of the Lord Jehovah*, that is, to have all divine power and authority veſted in him, until every oppoſition to that kingdom of grace and righteouſneſs, of which he was appointed king and head, ſhould be overthrown, or, in the Pſalmiſt's phraſe, be made as a footſtool unto him, or put down under his feet. This, the Pſalmiſt here declares, was a repreſentation of him, not as a deſcendant of his, according to the fleſh, but as his Lord, and the Lord, alſo, or ruler of angels and men.

VERSE 2. *The Lord ſhall ſend the rod of thy ſtrength out of Zion: rule thou in the midſt of thine enemies.*—As if he had ſaid, 'although 'thy exalted power has not its ſource or appointment in earth, but 'in heaven, and the diſplay of it is not to be limited or confined to 'one nation, city, or place; yet, in reſpect to a proper œconomy in 'the diſpenſations of divine grace, and to mark the communication 'of it to the world, a family was choſen, and a nation raiſed up, to 'maintain the worſhip and ſervice of the living God, and with it 'the covenant of promiſe was made; there is to be expected, and 'there is to be firſt exhibited by thy perſonal appearance, as the Redeemer, the power of God, and the wiſdom of God. The ſcene 'of thy miraculous works ſhall demonſtrate the firſt, and the truth 'and purity of thy doctrines the ſecond. *Rule thou, therefore, as 'highly becomes thee, in the midſt of thine enemies;* whether they be 'thoſe of the Jewiſh nation, who, in the pride of their carnal hearts, 'and wholly ſet upon the enjoyment of an earthly kingdom, ſhall 'be ſtumbled at, or deſpiſe the neceſſary and appointed ſtate of 'thy humiliation and meritorious ſufferings for the ſins of mankind, or whether they be the bulk of the Gentile world; who,

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'deluded with the conceit of their own wiſdom, and reſolute upon 'walking in their own ways, think they ſtand in need of no coun-'ſel or direction, either as to religion or morality, from the Father 'of their ſpirits, the ſource of every ray, or ſpark of underſtanding 'and knowledge found among the children of men.'

Yet, ſays the Pſalmiſt, verſe 3. *Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holineſs from the womb of the morning: thou haſt the dew of thy youth.*—The firſt clauſe of theſe words eaſily admits of a proper interpretation; but the latter and larger clauſe, being expreſſed in the metaphorical ſtyle, has been variouſly expounded by the beſt commentators. *Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power.* All thoſe in every country and nation, who are to conſtitute that holy body, called thy church and people, ſhall be converted unto thee, not implicitly, as if they knew not why, or were compelled to it without reaſon and conviction; for the ſpirit of power that will be ſent forth from thee is a ſpirit of light, that diſpels the darkneſs and prejudices of human minds, and opens them to the impreſſions of truth, which, being ever found in thy heavenly word, will operate with all perſuaſive energy to their converſion and ſalvation. Juſtly, therefore, may it be ſaid of thee, *that in the beauties of holineſs from the womb of the morning: thou haſt the dew of thy youth.* To diveſt theſe words of the metaphor uſed in them, and to expound them in any clear and appoſite ſenſe, is confeſſed to be difficult, although a general and vague conception of their meaning may be formed. To remove the obſcurity, different tranſlations of the Hebrew text have been given by the learned; and, what is very remarkable, the *Septuagint*, or Greek verſion, of the Old Teſtament, renders the words as if there was a different reading in the Hebrew itſelf, in this manner, *Before the morning ſtar, or the beginning of time, I begat thee:* A ſignal and emphatic declaration of the eternal generation of the only begotten of God, an adorable truth: But then it ſeems not to ſtand here in any connection with the firſt clauſe of the verſe, or with the following one. To keep to our tranſ-

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lation, and explain the words as they ſtand in it, the following comment may be given them. In the *beauties of holineſs*, that is, 'in 'the excellency of holineſs, which is the greateſt beauty in the moral 'world, and which ſhall come with thee from the womb, and ſhine 'in thy earlieſt days, the ſigns and preſages ſhall be given of what 'thy riper years will bring forth. Even then, the immaculate ſanc-'tity of thy nature ſhall be perſpicuous, and have its influence, al-'though a ſecret one, upon all around thee, and which may be com-'pared to the dew of the morning that falls ſilently, and cheriſhes 'the tender graſs; whence may be underſtood what the riſen day 'of thy holy adminiſtration ſhall accompliſh for the ſouls of men, 'and the glory of thy Almighty Father.'

LECTURE XXIX.

PSALM CX. Continued.

IN connection with this ſpotleſs ſanctity of the Redeemer, the Pſalmiſt declares, verſe 4. *The Lord hath ſworn, and will not repent, thou art a prieſt for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*—In the diſpenſation of divine mercy to a ſinful world, it was neceſſary that there ſhould be an inſtitution of a prieſtly office, or of one or more perſons appointed to perform, in a ſolemn manner, the religious ſervice required by God, and, eſpecially, to ſupplicate and offer up prayers in behalf of the people. Such an inſtitution there was under the Moſaic law, in conformity to which *Aaron* was firſt called of God, Heb. v. 4. to officiate; and a tribe, having a high prieſt at their head, was ordained to ſerve at the altar, and in the courts of

the Lord. But, ſays the Pſalmiſt, there is an appointment of the Meſſiah to the office of high prieſt, of a nature and dignity far tranſcending this legal ordinance, and of which the prieſthood under that law was not an adequate type; but the figure or repreſentation of it was given in the perſon and character of *Melchizedek, King of Salem, and prieſt of the Moſt High God*, mentioned Gen. xxiv. 19. *Of whom it is ſaid, that he was without father, without mother, without beginning of days, or end of life; but one made like the Son of God, and therefore abideth a prieſt continually.* Heb. vii. 3. How admirably qualified, then, may not we all ſay, art thou, *O ſpotleſs Lamb of God*, to atone for and take away the ſins of a guilty world. How adapted were thy offices for this end and purpoſe, and in what a perfect manner were they performed by thee. Each of them was neceſſary and prefigured; and one of them ſo awful, that every angel in heaven turned his face from it; yet ſuch was thy ardent and ready deſire to accompliſh what was indiſpenſibly requiſite for maintaining the honour of the divine laws, and purchaſing the redemption of mankind, that thy voice was heard from before the throne of God, in theſe words, *Lo! I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*

VERSES 5, & 6. *The Lord at thy right hand ſhall ſtrike through kings in the day of his wrath. He ſhall judge among the heathen: he ſhall fill the places with the dead bodies: he ſhall wound the heads over many countries.*—To underſtand theſe words, as explicable of the *Meſſiah's* victories over his enemies, and thoſe of his church and people, we muſt conſider that they were of a twofold kind, one *temporal*, and the other *ſpiritual*. If the inſpiration of the Pſalmiſt had led him to inſiſt upon the latter, rather than the former, which, in our conceptions, was the propereſt and moſt important of the two to be held forth, the effect upon the minds of the congregations of Iſrael would have been far leſs, or, without a miracle, of no avail at all.

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The minds of that people were not yet prepared, or their ears opened to this ſpiritual diſcipline. Accuſtomed to hear of and to celebrate, in their public aſſemblies, the wonderful works of God exhibited to them and their fathers in a temporal manner; the tranſition from that to views of the Meſſiah's kingdom, as not eſſentially or in its main principles, of this world, was to be made gradually, and by intermediate and figurative repreſentations. Hence, David's victories over the many enemies of Iſrael, and that were ſignal and acknowledged teſtimonies of the almighty power of God exerted in his and their favour, are ſolemnized in this Pſalm; which even the leaſt inſtructed Iſraelite conſidered as an earneſt and pledge of what was to be performed in the yet more glorious day of the *Meſſiah*. It could not be proclaimed to them in more acceptable terms. The alluſions are deſcriptive of the character he would ſuſtain both as a judge and a victorious captain. Thoſe heathen nations, which were the chief nurſeries and obſtinate defenders of idol worſhip, would become the firſt objects of his indignation, whoſe kings and rulers, as incorrigible, *he would ſpeak to in wrath, and ſtrike down in ſome tremenduous ſhape*. All this was fit to be believed, in order to keep up in the minds of the people of Iſrael a conſtancy of faith and truſt in that God whom they ſerved, and had, on this account, to bear the hatred or the ſcorn of the nations around them, becauſe they complied not with, but ſtood ſingle in oppoſing and deteſting their abominable worſhip.

But the Pſalmiſt adds, verſe 7th, *He ſhall drink of the brook in the way: therefore ſhall he lift up the head.*—In what ſenſe were the Iſraelites to underſtand this ſingular expreſſion, which appears to be in no agreement with the magnificent language that goes before it. Was this temporal conqueror of nations to have his head bowed down, and not to lift it up, *until he drank of the brook in the way?* It is only, ſay the Jewiſh doctors, a poetical expreſſion ſignifying the expedition and celerity with which he would go on, and that allow-

ed him not to turn aſide for any other refreſhment. But this explication by no means reaches the import of the words that do not ſlightly allude to, but put an emphaſis upon *his drinking the brook in the way;* as if from thence aroſe the cauſe of his *lifting up* his head. Metaphorical and figurative language and phraſes, ſay they, are not to be examined too nicely. The ſame, ſay we, and that the brook to be drank of, and here uſed as a figure of the ſufferings of the Redeemer, although conſidered as one of puddled waters, was not an adequate or quite diſtinct ſignification of them; but ſuch a one as was conſonant with the general ſtrain of the Pſalm, that is ſingularly deſcriptive of the dignified perſon and exalted character of the Meſſiah, who, as the appointed King of Zion, was to be inveſted with power more than ſufficient to overthrow all his enemies, whether temporal or ſpiritual.

There are obvious reaſons why the Meſſiah ſhould be qualified to act victoriouſly againſt them both: Nay, there appears to be a greater and more illuſtrious diſplay of the divine power in his overcoming the latter rather than the former. Many of the earthly kings and princes had brought nations under outward and bodily ſubjection to their arbitrary ſway. But were they made *willingly, and from their hearts obedient to it?* No: What was begun by compulſion, was maintained by external force. In a theoretical view, it appears highly preſumable, that the rule or dominion over men that the Meſſiah was to hold ſhould be diſtinguiſhable from, and in its main characteriſtic be a contraſt to the empires and kingdoms of the world. It was worthy of, and ſuitable to, the honour of him *who was ſent*, and the glory of the Deity by whom he was commiſſioned, that men ſhould be dealt with in a manner agreeable to their rank, as creatures endowed with reaſon, and ſuſceptible of moral, as well as rational, affections; and who, in their firſt parents, were made only a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour; and therefore, by means of the Meſſiah and agency of him who was the Mediator and Prince of Peace, to be put in a capacity

of

of being reſtored to their former dignity, and even to a higher ſphere of ſpiritual exaltation. The Jewiſh Rabbis, although they obſtinately contend for the Meſſiah's kingdom being an earthly one, do not explain in what ſhape it was to be conſtituted, and by what operation the Gentile nations to be received into it were to be rendered proper members of ſuch an eſtabliſhment. As it was a capital point in it, that the outward ordinances of the law were to be reſtored, and kept up in their greateſt ſolemnity and ſtrictneſs, and the diſtinction of their tribes, which had run into confuſion during their various and long captivities, to be adjuſted; the very conception how all this was to be accompliſhed, as the prophetical ſcriptures had thrown no light upon it, became ſuch a perplexity, as the moſt extravagant and wildeſt ſpeculations of the Rabbis could not, in any intelligible way, unfold.

To this undeſcribed and viſionary reign and miniſtration of a temporal Meſſiah, what do thoſe of the evangelical Redeemer oppoſe? not vague and conjectural theories, but facts, ſome of which, although myſterious, and not to be conceived by us, are declared to have taken place. Such is the union of the divine and human nature in the perſon of Chriſt, his ſupernatural production into the world, his miraculous reſurrection from the dead, and aſcenſion into heaven. Theſe are points of doctrine that, from their nature, fall not under the cognizance of human reaſon. They are revealed as objects of our faith, but not for our inveſtigation: Yet, with reſpect to the aſſumption of the human nature by the eternal Son of God, in order to aboliſh the guilt of ſin contracted in it, we may perceive a propriety, although not the abſolute neceſſity or perfect reaſon for it, have cauſe to ſay and believe, that, being the appointment of God, it muſt be founded upon a principle ſo indiſpenſible in his moral government, that any other method of ſalvation for ſinful mankind would have led to conſequences that were to be avoided, and eſpecially that of rendering ſin and tranſgreſſion not only of little moment in the eyes of men, but in the ſight of the angels in heaven.

After

After ſtating theſe myſteries of the ſpiritual kingdom of the promiſed Meſſiah, what do we find in the events of providence, in evidence that *Jeſus Chriſt* was that divine perſon appointed to come forth for the redemption of mankind, and that, beſides him, there could be no other? It may be affirmed with truth, that when we conſider the outward, viſible, and miraculous ſigns and atteſtations given, that he was not only *a prophet ſent from God* to that nation, as others had been before him, and which the Jews in general acknowledged him to be, but that *pre-eminent* and diſtinguiſhed one, of whom all the ſcriptural and prophetical writers had ſpoken; when we join to this evidence that of his heavenly doctrines, the whole ſcene of his life unwearied in doing good, and concluded, as was foretold, by his *being cut off as an atoning and expiatory ſacrifice for the tranſgreſſions of his people; the chaſtiſement of them being laid upon him, that by his ſtripes they might be healed*; there is, I ſay, upon the weighing this evidence, a moſt ſtriking proof and confirmation afforded to the veracity and truth of the *Chriſtian faith*.

Nor will it detract from the ſtrength of this proof to allege, as the Jews do, what the Pſalmiſt here ſays of the Meſſiah's appointment *being to judge among the Heathen*, and act the part of an invincible and vengeful conqueror over their kings in many lands; while the higheſt temporal favour, dignity, and honour were to be their portion. But our Lord, although the angel of the covenant, and the meſſenger of peace, had expreſsly declared, that if they, a people who were witneſſes of, and had acceſs to conſider and know, how manifeſtly calculated the whole acts of his life were, his divine precepts, the unparalleled ſanctity of his character, and the preternatural circumſtances that attended his meritorious death, to accompliſh a ſpiritual ſalvation for Iſrael; if they not only reſiſted all theſe demonſtrations of his miſſion from on high for that end, but theſe of a ſimilar kind, and corrobrative of them, beheld in the effuſion of the ſame ſpirit of miraculous power upon his apoſtles and diſciples, in that caſe it would be found, that he had not ſent *peace to Iſrael, but a ſword*; nay, that they

they juſtly ſhould be made the firſt examples of the judgments of God, due to thoſe who *had deſpiſed the riches both of his wiſdom and mercy, wherewith he had abounded to them in Chriſt Jeſus.* Could there be a clearer prediction of any future event emitted, and the time and ſpecial circumſtances of it pointed out, than that pronounced by our Saviour concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem? The record of it by the evangeliſts appears liker the deſcription of a ſcene that had been ſeen, than of one that was foretold; ſo much do their accounts tally with the narrative given by the Jewiſh, and other writers, of the diſtreſſes and horrors preſented in the days of that ever memorable ſiege. By both the ſacred and prophane hiſtorians, the *note* about theſe is the ſame, *that the like had never been ſeen in any of the former calamities of war;* and that they appeared to be inflicted upon that city and nation, by the ſpecial ordination of the heavenly powers. The other poetical expreſſions of the Pſalmiſt, when he ſays that the Meſſiah ſhould *fill the places with dead bodies, and wound the heads over many countries*, may well be interpreted as having a reference to, and being fulfilled in the ſignal judgments that befel many of thoſe who, with the various titles of kings, rulers, prefects, and proconſuls, occupied the ſeats and places of authority through the wide extended bounds of the Roman empire, and with inhuman and barbarous rage perſecuted the Chriſtian name. Our Saviour had predicted that, antecedent to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, *his goſpel ſhould be preached among all the nations* appertaining to that empire. As the rage of perſecution firſt commenced at Jeruſalem, by Stephen the evangeliſt being *ſtoned to death;* and *Herod Antipas having killed James the brother of John with the ſword*, Acts vii.—Ibid chap. xii. ſo the Jews, diſperſed throughout the Roman provinces, generally became the moſt violent inſtigators of it. *They ſhall deliver you up to counſels*, ſaid our Lord *to his diſciples; and in the ſynagogues ye ſhall be beaten: and ye ſhall be brought before rulers and kings for my ſake, for a teſtimony againſt them.* Matth. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi. 13. where it is expreſſed, *that their ſufferings would turn to them for a teſtimony;*

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ſo that we may underſtand the teſtimony afforded, as having a two-fold conſequence; one in vindication of the integrity and veracity of what the diſciples witneſſed concerning Chriſt; to faith in whom, as the *Son of the living God*, they declared themſelves attached by the moſt irreſiſtible arguments, and declined not ſealing this teſtimony with their blood. The other was a juſtification of thoſe viſible and terrible judgments with which not only Judah and Iſrael were puniſhed, but the cities and palaces of thoſe wicked emperors who decreed tortures and death to the innocent followers of the *Redeemer of mankind.*

Upon the whole, we behold a ſeries of events that have not their parallel in the hiſtory of the world, and therefore the more diſtinguiſhable, and evinced to be of divine ordination. In the Scriptures, one great end of the revelation made is declared; namely, that the uſurpations of Satan, the prince of darkneſs, and the promoter of ſin in the human race, were to be controuled, and finally remedied by the advent of a Saviour, at an appointed time into our world. The family raiſed up into a populous nation, of whom he was to come, and his lineage in that nation, were pointed out. A ſanctuary to the worſhip and honour of the Creator of the heavens and the earth, ſuch as no where elſe could be ſeen, was eſtabliſhed among them. The cuſtody of this ſacred ſervice was the chief object of God's providential dealings with them, and not their temporal exaltation. As they obſerved or declined from it, they were favoured or puniſhed. The event of the coming of the Meſſiah was diſtant; and nothing could more demonſtrate the interpoſition of the hand of God for the protection of his ſanctuary than that, notwithſtanding the various revolutions and changes in their temporal condition in the elapſe of hundreds of years, the religious laws and inſtitutions, in a ſupernatural manner, given by *Moſes* to their forefathers, were preſerved, and, in general, with the exceptions of ſome corrupt gloſſes and ſuperſtitions, ſolemnly maintained in the *temple of Jeruſalem.*

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This was their peculiar and true glory, inſtead of an unhallowed and worldly exaltation, when they, together with many other nations, were ſubjected to the Roman dominion. But, highly preſumable as it was, that this ſyſtem of ſpiritual grace, which had been all along exhibited to them, would be promoted, and have its conſummation by the coming of the Meſſiah; a different leſſon was taught them by the expounders of their law and the prophets; and that every circumſtance reſpecting his perſon and offices was to announce his authority and power to ſubdue all their temporal enemies under them. Was this doctrine of their attaining an aſcendancy over the other nations of the earth, ſo clearly and conſtantly revealed, as that, previous to their receiving all the ſpecial and diſtinguiſhing benefits promiſed to them by the *Abrahamic* covenant, *iniquity was to be purged away from Iſrael*, or that method of grace, which was ordained of God for that purpoſe, adopted by them? Did thoſe who, about the time of Chriſt's birth, *waited for the conſolation of Iſrael*, or *Zacharias*, who, in the ſpirit of prophecy, declared the time of it was come; and that the child born to him was to be the immediate harbinger of the Meſſiah, *and to prepare his way*, who was *to give the knowledge of ſalvation to his people, by the remiſſion of their ſins?* did not they, I ſay, utter ſentiments, and ſpeak a language, more conſonant to the whole procedure of God with reſpect to that people, which teſtified that not outward and periſhable good, not a temporal, but a ſpiritual and everlaſting ſalvation was intended for them, than thoſe who preferred the former to the latter, and would have no Meſſiah, *whoſe ſoul was to be made an offering unto God for ſin;* however fit and neceſſary this might be judged in the counſels of heaven, that were calculated, not for the benefit of the ſeed of Abram only, but all them in every nation, *whoſe faith*, being ſuch as that of the Patriarch, *might be imputed to them for righteouſneſs*, which they, no more than he, although renewed in the ſpirit of their

minds, could perform in ſo perfect a manner as the holineſs of his law required; and yet were to become *heirs* of a heavenly and endleſs life.

I further add, that the Jewiſh *Rabbis*, whether they interpret this Pſalm, as deſcriptive only of David's exaltation to the throne of Judah and Iſrael, or as typical of the victories to be obtained by their Meſſiah, cannot properly explain *his drinking of the brook in the way*, after which, *he would lift up the head*, without admitting theſe expreſſions to denote, at leaſt, ſome degree of humiliation or adverſity he was to undergo, which yet they hold to be altogether incompetent to him. But if this doctrine, which is contradicted by the Prophets, were allowed to be true, then we muſt ſay, that David, admitted to be, from the circumſtances of his life, a moſt eminent and appoſite type of the Meſſiah's appointed offices and character under the law, ſtands in direct oppoſition to *one*, who was to be expoſed to no ſufferings, but to have an uninterrupted ſeries of victories and triumphs: For, as the Book of Pſalms teſtifies, the King of Iſrael had reaſons and grounds to write up a memorial of his afflictions and ſufferings to ſuch an extent, as almoſt equals the outward proſperities of his reign. When we look upon the account given in the 22d Pſalm, we may rather, and with juſtice, conclude, that he draws a picture of ſufferings far exceeding his own, and that were only, in a particular manner, exemplified in his perſon, but which he, as a prophet, knew would be the lot, and have their literal accompliſhment in that of the *Redeemer* of Iſrael; when ſuffering for the ſins of a guilty world, and under the preſſure of his Father's wrath, ſhould cry, *My God, my God! why haſt thou forſaken me? I am poured out like water; and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax melted in the midſt of my bowels.*

It belongs to the Jewiſh interpreters of this Pſalm to point out what part of David's afflictions correſponds to this moſt pathetic deſcription

ſcription of agony and diſtreſs of his ſoul and body. They will no where, in the hiſtory of his life, what, allowing for poetic amplification, can be thought to authoriſe it, but in a ſmall degree. It is remarkable, that his deſcriptions of perſonal diſtreſs, which come neareſt to the one here given, are thoſe in which he laments his ſins and tranſgreſſions before God; as if he was made not only to exemplify the ſorrow of a ſincere penitent, but ſo far to feel in his ſoul, and be enabled to expreſs, in the moſt affecting language, ſome part of that ineffable grief of the Redeemer, to which no other could be compared; when God laid upon him, *who knew no ſin, the iniquities of his people.* If the Jew, who reads the ſufferings of Chriſt in the evangelical record of them, be ſtill ſtumbled at his croſs; and knows not to whom it is referable, he muſt, at leaſt, be amazed and perplexed to find this picture of diſtreſs ſo exactly, and in every point, verified and realiſed in the death of him, whom we hold to be the *Lamb of God ordained to take away the ſins of the world.*

LECTURE XXX.

PSALM CXII.

THE deep ſenſe of religion, which the Pſalmiſt every where diſcovers in theſe excellent compoſitions, does not appear to have been taken up on a ſuperficial knowledge of things. He had ſuch apprehenſions of God and goodneſs, as ſerved at once to enlighten his underſtanding, and kindle the pureſt affections in his ſoul. It was a divine principle that inſpired him with theſe noble ſtrains fo

praiſe, and a motive far beyond the power of inconſiderate zeal that directed his choice to the ſubject of his melody. He celebrates the excellencies of a pious and devout life in a manner that beſpeaks his love to holineſs, on account of its unfeigned charms; while he forgets not to inform us, that it alſo conſtitutes the happineſs of a reaſonable creature. The ſerious attention he gave to the laws of the divine government enabled him to diſcern that righteouſneſs and truth, which was ordained by God for the rule of human actions, could not itſelf be void of regularity, but muſt, wherever duly followed, advance the order and harmony, and, conſequently, the peace and tranquillity of human life. In this Pſalm, which we have read, he inſiſts at large on the connection of virtue and happineſs; ſhowing, that *goodneſs is profitable unto all things, having the promiſe of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.* A regard to the commandments of God, the Pſalmiſt alleges to be no way inconſiſtent with our well-being in this preſent ſtate, but is rather found conducive to it; ſo far as the enjoyments of this world, that are by nature variable, can be aſcertained by any rule, or be deſired, without prejudice to the higher and more valuable intereſt of our ſouls. But, without anticipating what will come in more properly afterwards, or making a diviſion of the Pſalm, which the nature of ſuch compoſition does not always allow, I begin to explain the verſes as they ſtand before us.

VERSE 1. *Praiſe ye the Lord. Bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.*—Here the Pſalmiſt invites men to celebrate the praiſes of the Lord, and makes uſe of an argument that ſeems moſt proper to have the deſired effect. Full well he knew the bent of human nature towards happineſs, and that the general error lay in miſtaken apprehenſions of what is truly good. Therefore, he applies himſelf to this deſire of happineſs, of which all men are poſſeſſed, as the great ſpring that would give motion

tion to all the affections of the mind, and pronounces that *man bleſſed who feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.* As if he had ſaid, Before all the vain pretenders to enjoyment, and the falſe appearances of pleaſure, which many in the world are blindly led to admire; I prefer the man, who having his mind impreſſed with a juſt ſenſe of the ſacred relation he ſtands in to God, the great author of all good, makes the laws of the divine appointment the invariable rule of his conduct, and conforms himſelf to them, not with ſuch a fear as the dictates of a tyrannical maſter are obeyed; but who, from an unfeigned eſteem of the excellence of a life formed after the revealed image of the divine nature, takes pleaſure in the reaſonable duties God hath called him to perform: And this, I aſſert, is the perſon who truly deſerves to be accounted happy; he only is bleſſed with the trueſt wiſdom, and poſſeſſed of the pureſt enjoyments. In all other ſtudies, to which the mind of man can apply itſelf, the taſk is often painful, and the profit of our labour uncertain: We toil for that *which is not bread, and ſpend our ſtrength for that which ſatisfieth not.* But in this caſe every motion of the heart, that tends to ſtrengthen our regard to God, and increaſe our love to his commandments, is in itſelf a delightful exerciſe, and brings a genuine joy to the mind. We cannot have a becoming reverence of the Supreme Being impreſſed upon our hearts, without acknowledging the amiable perfections of his nature, and being filled with an inward pleaſure and ſatisfaction, from knowing, that the reins of government are lodged in hands directed by wiſdom, and upheld by mercy. And while we conſider the commandments of God as entirely correſpondent to ſo perfect a character, and all of them calculated to form our ſouls to a likeneſs with his divine nature, we may be convinced, that the more we advance in the ſtudy and contemplation of them, the more we learn to obey them with our whole heart; the greater ſecurity we have for our happineſs, and

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the more pure and exalted our enjoyments will be; ſince to be morally like God, the fountain of all felicity, is ſurely to be happy. Wherever his bleſſed image is formed in the mind, it communicates a degree of the everlaſting felicity he enjoys; it gives a taſte of the happineſs of heaven; it recommends us to his love, that we may grow up under the influence of it, and be gradually prepared for the full and perfect enjoyment of him, when this ſhort and tranſient life is at an end. Therefore, ſays the Pſalmiſt, in the laſt verſe of the preceding Pſalm, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom; and good underſtanding* (or good ſucceſs) *have all they that keep his commandments.*

VERSES 3, & 4. *His ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed. Wealth and riches ſhall be in his houſe: and his righteouſneſs endureth for ever.*—Although theſe promiſes do properly belong to the Moſaic diſpenſation, in which the duties of religion were moſtly inforced by temporal rewards, and a future ſtate of bleſſedneſs which the goſpel calls its faithful diſciples to expect, but darkly revealed; yet, if we examine the nature and tendency of the laws preſcribed for the government of the Chriſtian life, it will appear they are ſufficient to attain all that is neceſſary for our well-being in this world. The ſmiles of fortune, indeed, do not always wait upon the good, neither is proſperity entailed by line upon the juſt and upright man, but the principles of righteouſneſs and truth are the beſt and moſt ſolid foundation upon which we can ſupport our concerns among men. As long as they live in ſociety together, the credit and authority of the laws of religion and virtue, and the ſacred bounds of juſtice, muſt be preſerved; and truth and honeſty held in ſuch reputation as to give advantage to the perſon who is known to be ſteadily governed by them in all his actions. Hence, the appearance of virtue, and a ſeeming regard to religion, is

aſſumed

assumed by those who have formed designs that are contrary to both, and the greatest art is employed to keep a fair character, that they may not lose all trust and confidence among men; who would choose the friendship of the perfidious and ungrateful, or believe the lying and reproachful tongue? It is the cloke of humility that serves to advance the proud into power, and an affected humanity to others, that makes way for the snares of the spiteful in heart. If, then, the show of religion does so much avail men of profligate minds that, without it, they could accomplish none of the ends they have in view, either of profit or power in society; surely the true and genuine spirit of it will have a stronger influence to engage the good will, the favour and esteem of all with whom we converse. Experienced honesty will gain credit, temperance will preserve what industry has gained, and God will prosper the righteous in his way; while the deceitful methods of the hypocrite shall fail; and that wealth he acquired, by treachery and injustice, be laid waste by the extravagance of some lawless lust or passion that has gained the ascendant over his mind. Though fraud and extortion may be thought sometimes the quickest, it is far from being the surest way to the possession of wealth; for, as the hand of the unjust is against every man, so every one's hand will be against him, and it will be difficult to make others keep those terms with him, that he hath broke with them. But the good and righteous man, who is seen to pursue the laudable methods of diligence and industry, and, in all his dealings with the world, acts the like sincere and faithful part to others he wishes they should do unto him, has certainly the fairest prospect of succeeding in his endeavours for a competent share in the good things of this life; and when they are attained, the wishes of all good men, the fervent prayers of the poor and needy, whom his charitable hand has fed and clothed, will always follow him; and that merciful providence of God, which is extended to the evil and unthankful, will not fail to be particularly engaged in his behalf, to bless

him

him in all his undertakings, to provide for himſelf, and thoſe of his houſehold; he ſhall be made the happy inſtrument of conveying the ſame principles of integrity to the minds of his children after him; by which they, too, ſhall enjoy the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs. Therefore, let us firſt *ſeek the kingdom of heaven and its righteouſneſs, and then we may expect, that whatever can contribute to our preſent ſatisfaction, as far as ſhall ſerve the glory of God, and our ſpiritual good, ſhall be added unto us.*

VERSE 4. *Unto the upright there ariſeth light in the darkneſs: he is gracious, and full of compaſſion, and righteous.*—But if the happineſs of the godly man does not appear by his outward circumſtances, which is frequently the caſe of the deareſt children of God in this ſtate of trial, the Pſalmiſt here ſhows the peculiar advantage that is derived from a knowledge of God, and a conformity to his will, from the ſtay and ſupport of the mind in ſeaſons of adverſity, when external things have a dark and cloudy appearance. *Unto the upright there ariſeth light in the darkneſs: he is gracious, and full of compaſſion, and righteous.* He hath learned more underſtanding from the law of God, and attentively conſidering the method of the divine adminiſtration here below, than to meaſure a happy life, from the abundance of outward things that he poſſeſſes, in enjoying the gaieties and pleaſures, the ſuperfluous wealth and falſe grandeur of this world. Theſe are what the earthly minded men have choſen for their chief good; without which there is nothing in life that can reliſh with them. When they come to be deprived of theſe things, and the continuance of them, all their ſkill cannot inſure the continuance for a moment; then, of all mankind, they are the moſt unhappy. But this is not the condition of him who hath made the laws of God his delight. While he hath the pleaſures of the world in his power, they oblige him to a more than ordinary watchfulneſs over his ſoul, leſt the ſnares, with which they abound, ſhould one day betray him into

into ſin or folly; and when theſe deceitful allurements are gone, he is at once delivered from them and their temptations. Then will he ſay within himſelf, why art thou diſquieted, O my ſoul? Thou waſt always afraid that, ſome time or other, I might have been drawn aſide from my love to God, by placing my affections on the vanities of time: Now, God having ſufficiently proved my integrity, and found me conſtant to him, has been pleaſed to remove me from the danger of falling by theſe deluſions; and that, as by his grace, *I have known how to abound, ſo now I may learn how to ſuffer need.* Have I not reaſon then to welcome this wiſe diſpenſation, and ſay, *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord.* Thus, in every calamity of life, the godly man can ſee a bright as well as a dark ſide of the cloud, *and ſing of mercy as well as judgment.* Nay, adverſity is the time when he may hope for greater meaſures of divine conſolation than at other ſeaſons; ſo ſays the prophet, Micah vii. 8. *Rejoice not againſt me, O mine enemy; though I fall, I ſhall ariſe; though I ſit in darkneſs, God ſhall be light unto me.* It is when outward circumſtances ſeem moſt unfavourable, that he hath the graces of the ſpirit in their moſt lively exerciſe; and while he is bearing his croſs, he knows that he is more conformed to the diſcipline of the Saviour: Who, then, would not ſit a while under the ſhade of affliction to be thus viſited with the beam of heavenly light? who would not live in poverty and want, to be thus rich in the graces of the ſpirit, *and filled with the joy of the Holy Ghoſt?* There is no affliction ſo great, no perplexity into which an upright man can be caſt, but a conſciouſneſs *that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity he hath had his converſation in the world*, will diffuſe a ſerene complacence over his mind. A ſenſe of the divine favour will make him ſmile amidſt the injuries of time, and all the calamities of a preſent tranſitory life: *For theſe light afflictions which are but for a moment, will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

The Pſalmiſt further adds, as a principal part of this amiable character which he draws, that *He is gracious, and full of compaſſion, and righteous.*—That is, he will exerciſe a tender and compaſſionate regard to all his fellow brethren in whatever condition they are placed; not inſulting over their weakneſs or miſbehaviour, as is too much the practice of the world, but doing all he can to reclaim, and bring them to a better mind: And, if they labour under want and ſtraitening circumſtances, he will be glad of an opportunity to co-operate with Providence, and relieve them to the beſt of his power. His beneficent diſpoſition will incline him to ſhow favour, and lend out of his own ſubſtance a ſeaſonable ſupply to thoſe whom he knows to be induſtrious; but want the materials neceſſary for the labour of their hands, or to give *freely a part to the poor or diſtreſſed*, expecting nothing again, and eſteeming no compenſation he could receive ſo precious or pleaſant, as the ſenſe that attends a deed of charity. And, to enable him the more to continue theſe inſtances of his bounty, *he will guide his affairs with diſcretion*; is that principle of virtue which teaches the time, place, and means that render any good we intend to do profitable. It preſcribes bounds even to our benevolent diſpoſitions, by duly diſtinguiſhing the objects to whom they are directed; and aſſigning the meaſure of what we are to beſtow. Without a regard to this, the means of doing good would ſoon fail, and acts of charity loſe their deſigned effect. Therefore, as the good man hath a ready will to ſhow favour and kindneſs, ſo he will ſtudy to do it in a manner that is moſt ſuitable to the circumſtances of thoſe he deſires to relieve; little regarding how his bounty may appear before men, but how it may be moſt uſeful to them who are made ſharers in it. The charitable man, the effect of whoſe kindneſs the poor and needy have often felt in the time of their calamity, has the greateſt reaſon to expect, that as he gave bread to the hungry, and viſited the helpleſs ſtate of the orphan, ſo God will manifeſt his goodneſs to him, by *feeding his ſoul with*

with the bread of life, and ſupporting him by his grace when the gloomy hours of affliction ſurround him.

VERSES 6, & 7. *Surely he ſhall not be moved for ever: the righteous ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance. He ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord.*—In theſe verſes, the Pſalmiſt calls us to obſerve the ſtability of the good man's happineſs; which, being independent of external things, the ſmiles and frowns of fortune can no way alter. When riches take unto themſelves wings and fly away, and thoſe who truſted in them are put to ſhame and confuſion, the man, who has made the laws of God his counſellors, is not affected by the change and viciſſitude to which all earthly enjoyments are liable. Though loſſes and calamities of this kind fall thick upon him, and the deſpondent looks and fearful words of thoſe around him increaſe ſurpriſe; yet he will not be overtaken with diſmay; for, he knoweth that the foundation of his peace ſtandeth ſure, being built on the faithfulneſs of him who faileth never: *His heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord.* Always conſtant in the belief that an all-wiſe and gracious hand orders every event in life, he cheerfully reſigns himſelf to the will of an ever righteous God; knowing that he is able *to make all things work together for the good of thoſe who truſt in him with a perfect heart.*

It is alſo ſaid here by the Pſalmiſt, *That the righteous ſhall be held in everlaſting remembrance*; that is, the memory of his charity and goodneſs cannot eaſily be forgotten by thoſe who have experienced his bounty; but generations after ſhall call him bleſſed. We often ſee a good character which, in the perſon's lifetime, had not that regard paid to it which was due, ſhine forth with greater luſtre when he is removed out of the world; and men made more ſenſible of the loſs of one eminent for truth, juſtice, and un-

corrupted integrity, than ever they were before. Then his behaviour is called to mind, and becomes an inſtructive leſſon to mankind. Thus, the example of Job, and other pious ſouls, will live for ever in the minds of men, to produce the fruits of righteouſneſs in all thoſe who ſtrive to imitate thoſe great patterns of charity and patience: So that as the wiſe man ſaith, Prov. x. 7. *The memory of the juſt is bleſſed: but the name of the wicked ſhall rot.* But if an ungrateful world ſuffers the memory of the good man to periſh with his body in the duſt, yet in heaven his name ſhall never be forgotten, but ſtand recorded there in never fading characters, being written in *the Lamb's book of life among the living in Jeruſalem.*

VERSE 8. *His heart is eſtabliſhed, he ſhall not be afraid, until he ſee his deſire upon his enemies.*—But with all the advantages which attend the blameleſs life of the righteous man, and ſhould recommend it to the eſteem of every reaſonable mind, yet we are not to expect he will meet with no oppoſition from the envy or malice of the wicked. Enemies he will have ready enough to improve the moſt inſignificant parts of his behaviour to his diſadvantage, and lay hold on ſomething to his reproach. But, though the wicked bend their bow, and whet their arrows to wound the innocent, they need not be diſmayed: The Lord who ſits in heaven, and gives to the ſea his decree that its proud waves ſhould not paſs his commandment; hath he not power over the wrath of man to turn it howſoever he pleaſeth? So far as ſuiteth with his counſels it is permitted to go; but, when it would go further, *the ſword of the revengeful ſhall be turned upon themſelves, and the bow of the wicked ſhall be broken.* If, then, our hearts be thus ſtayed on God, we need not fear what man can do unto us. The cauſe of the innocent ſhall be at laſt vindicated, to the confuſion of them who ſought his hurt. He ſhall ſee his deſire upon his enemies, either by their being made ſenſible of their injuſtice in taking up a groundleſs hatred againſt him,

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him, or its being put out of their power to carry their wicked deſigns into execution againſt him: *And all men ſhall fear and ſhall declare the work of God, for they ſhall wiſely conſider of his doing: But the righteous ſhall be glad in the Lord, and ſhall truſt in him; and all the upright in heart ſhall glory.* Great reaſon, then, have we to join earneſtly with the Pſalmiſt, and to confeſs, that *bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.*

FINIS.

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